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The Haunted Husband

By Mrs. Harriet Lewis,

Author of "Her Double Life," etc.

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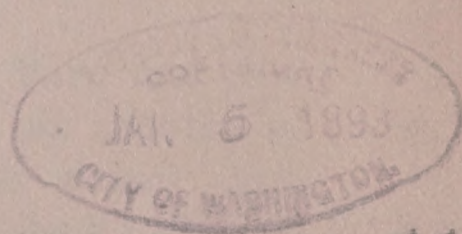
BY

MRS. HARRIET LEWIS,

Author of "Lady Kildare," "Beryl's Husband," "The Old Life's Shadows," "Neva's Three Lovers," etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY VICTOR PERARD.

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THE HAUNTED HUSBAND.

CHAPTER I.

A MYSTERY OF ST. KILDA.



HE island of St. Kilda, the outermost island of the group of the Outer Hebrides, lies a hundred and fifty miles to the westward of Scotland, and is a mere rock in the midst of a lonely and fretful sea.

The climate of this bare and desolate islet comprises six months of winter, in which no vessel dare approach the storm-lashed rock, and in which, therefore, no token of the outside world can come to the islanders. Their village is situated on the west bay, and looks, as one has aptly said, from the peculiar forms of the roofs, not unlike a Hottentot kraal. Prominent among these humble thatched dwellings are the small church and the manse, in which resides with his family the pastor of this dreary and lone sea parish.

One October afternoon, a few years ago, a girl stood upon the summit of one of the dizzy and beetling cliffs overlooking the bay and the great restless Atlantic, at a point to which few of the daring young fowlers of St. Kilda would have dared to climb. Her garments were blowing in the free salt wind. Her unbound hair streamed behind her in a dun cloud. Her dusky eyes were shaded by one slender brown hand, and gazed down upon the waters of the bay with keen and unrestful glances.

She was scarcely seventeen years old, and as wild and free as the birds circling above her. She was not beautiful—she was too thin and dark for beauty—but there was the promise of a glorious loveliness in the passionate young face, in the tremulously eager mouth, and in the delicately cut features. She was as brown as a gypsy, and as light and lithe, with a gypsy grace in her slender figure and fearless attitude, a tender sweetness in her big brown eyes, and a shade of natural haughtiness upon the broad, frank, noble brows.

She was known as Bernice Gwellan, the adopted daughter of the Rev. David Gwellan, the pastor of St. Kilda. She had spent nearly all her life on the island. She remembered no shores save those rocky bluffs, no people save these rude inhabitants of St. Kilda. But she was not like them.

The good minister and his wife—the former Welsh by birth, the latter a Scotch woman—were educated and accomplished, and fitted to adorn a refined society.

The worthy pair had carefully educated their young charge, teaching her music, various languages, and all the accomplishments known to themselves. She was an apt scholar, refined even to daintiness, pure, sweet, and true as truth itself ; but they had long since despaired of making her a parish teacher. She was like

an eaglet in the nest of the dove, and her foster-parents were full of misgivings in regard to her future. What was to become of her? She would never marry one of her rude native admirers. Would she fret out her life on this island rock, or would the eaglet some day find its wings and fly to a fairer shore?

Ah, the time was nearer than the good couple thought! The eaglet had found its wings, and they were already poised for flight!

As Bernice stood upon the dangerous pinnacle of rock, her red gown fluttering in the wind, her wandering glances became fixed upon a sight rare indeed in those waters. A graceful English pleasure yacht was lying at anchor in the bay below. A few sailors, in trim costume of blue jackets and white trowsers lounged upon the deck. A boat manned by four seamen was pushing off toward the shore, and in the stern of the boat lounged the owner of the yacht, the young Marquis of Chetwynd.

Glancing upward, he beheld the girl's figure upon the perilous point of rock high up the precipitous wall. He turned pale and waved his handkerchief to her, making a gesture to her to descend.

The girl's face lit up with a glow that for the moment transformed it into surpassing beauty. Her brilliant eyes burned with a tender flame. Answering the signal of the young Englishman, she began her descent, leaping from crag to crag like a chamois, while he watched her progress with suspended breath.

At last, as the boat struck the beach, Bernice came to a halt in a natural grotto, from which the descent to the shore was not difficult.

It was here the young marquis presently found her. He came up the rocks calling her name, and for answer there stole out to him a burst of weird, sweet music, as

the girl swept the strings of her guitar with her hand. He entered the grotto and advanced toward her with outstretched hands, but she retreated before him, shy and coquettish, and, circling him, was again at the mouth of the grotto and out upon the crags.

"Bernice," said the young lord, in a tone of chagrin, "is this your welcome of me? You are as shy of me as yonder eider-ducks. You have never even let me kiss your lips. And yet you have said that you love me—"

"Girls don't mean all they say," interrupted Bernice, saucily. "I wonder what brought you up here to-day, Lord Chetwynd. But as you are here, let us finish reading 'Maud.' Will you get out the Tennyson, or shall I?"

The young lord's face grew pale and stern. He was very handsome after the purest Saxon type, with fair hair and blue eyes, and with a golden mustache shading his firm mouth and drooping upon his delicate chin. He was tall and slender, refined in appearance almost to effeminacy, yet his taper fingers were capable of a grip of iron, and his blue eyes had in them, at times, a light like the flashing of a polished steel sword in the sunlight. He was brave as a lion. He was noble to his heart's core. He scorned a lie; was honorable even to Quixotism; was generous, unselfish—was, in short, the grandest, noblest type of a gentleman. To simple, island-bred little Bernice, he seemed a demi-god.

"Women are all alike," said his lordship, bitterly. "Let one grow up all alone, in the desert of Sahara even, and she will inevitably be a coquette. I have not come here to-day to read Tennyson, Bernice. Our summer idyl is over. I left home in May for a three months' trip to Norway and Denmark, and having strayed to St. Kilda in August, have remained here

since. The long winter of storm and snow will soon close in upon this island, when no vessel can enter or leave this bay, and I must go. My skipper is full of prophecies of evil if we linger. In short, Bernice, the *Sylvia* will sail to-morrow."

The girl started, her brown cheeks paling, and a frightened look leaping to her eyes.

"To-morrow!" she echoed. "So soon! Oh, Roy, I had not thought that you must ever leave St. Kilda. To-morrow! Oh, no, you are joking. Say, Roy, that you are only teasing me!"

"Shall you care, then?" cried the young lord, eagerly. "I must go, Bernice. I have friends, duties, a place in life, and I cannot stay longer here. My friends have not heard from me in four months, and they will be anxious about me. They think me in Norway still. You see I must go, Bernice; but I need not go alone. I came here to-day to ask you to go with me as my wife. I love you better than all the world. My love for you is like that wild, mad passion Romeo felt for Juliet. Two months ago I did not know that you lived; to-day you are my life, my soul, the one being to me of all the universe. Bernice, I will not go without you!"

"I cannot let you leave me," she whispered. "Oh, Roy! this world would be dark to me without you! How have I lived until I knew you? Another winter at St. Kilda, shut in by the angry Atlantic and the frightful winds, would be unendurable to me, after this bright, sweet, late summer. But you are rich and titled, Roy, and I am only a poor island girl. Will you never become tired of me? Will you never be ashamed of me? Will you never regret the generous love that impels you to make me your wife?"

"'Love levels all ranks,' Bernice, and you and I are

equal. I have money and title ; you have genius and goodness, and a strange power of fascination. I would rather be your husband, than to be king of all the earth. My marriage with you will be the crowning joy of my life, as I pray it may be of yours."

"But, Roy, what will your friends say?"

"I have neither father nor mother," said the young marquis, half sadly ; "and as my uncles and aunts do not consult me about their plans, they will scarcely expect me to consult them about mine. My nearest friends cannot justly be called my relatives, Bernice. They share my home, and will be your nearest friends and companions. They are my step-brother and step-sister, the children of my mother's second husband, and they are especially dear to me."

"You never spoke of them to me before, Roy."

"Did I not? It must be because when I am with you I can think of no one but you," said Lord Chetwynd, smiling brightly and lovingly down upon her. "I must make amends for my silence now. My father died in my early boyhood, Bernice. I was Lord Chetwynd before I went to Eton. My mother, a fair and gentle lady, whom you would have loved, remained a widow for some years, and finally married a second time, while I was at Oxford. Her second husband was Colonel the Honorable Gilbert Monk, the brother of an earl, an old East Indian officer, a dark-browed man of wonderful fascinations, who married my mother through the sheer force of his own will, and not through any especial love on either side. It was a singular and unsuitable marriage, and I was never reconciled to it. Colonel Monk had been previously married in India, and had two children, born in India, whom he brought with him to Chetwynd Park. In the second year of his marriage to my mother Colonel Monk died. As his fortune, an

annuity, died with him, his children were but slenderly provided for, and in his last moments Colonel Monk entreated my mother to promise that she would be a mother to them. The promise was readily given. A little over a year ago my mother also died, and bequeathed to me her step-children as a special charge, to be befriended and provided for by me. I gave her my solemn promise that Sylvia should always have a home at Chetwynd Park. They seem like brother and sister to me, and share my home, as I said, as if they possessed a right there equal or only less than mine."

"How old are they, Roy?"

"Gilbert is two years older than I—five-and-twenty, in fact,—and Sylvia—I named my yacht for her—is two-and-twenty. Gilbert has no profession, and depends upon me as a younger brother might depend upon an elder. I believe his chief ambition is to achieve a rich marriage. Sylvia will no doubt contract a brilliant marriage some day, but I hope she will remain with us for many, many years. You will love her at sight. How surprised Gilbert and Sylvia will be when I return to them with my bride! You will sail with me to-morrow, will you not, Bernice?"

"If my parents are willing," the girl answered softly, her brown face aglow with blushes.

"Let us go to them at once," cried the young lover, all eagerness and impatience. "Your father must have seen that I love you, Bernice. I have been at the manse every day since my arrival at this island. I brought him letters from a Scottish minister, Mrs. Gwellan's cousin, and he knows my whole history. Had he intended to refuse me your hand, he would not have permitted our rambles among the cliffs, our rows along the coast, and our excursions over the island and up the hills.

His lordship was eager to put his fate to the test, and the young pair presently set out to descend the crags on their way to the manse.

On reaching the dwelling, Lord Chetwynd pleaded his cause so eloquently that the old clergyman said :

“ My lord, you tempt me beyond my powers of resistance. My health is feeble. If I were to die, my wife would go back to her own kindred in Scotland, but they are too poor to give Bernice also a home. She is ignorant of the world. What would become of her? She could not be left here among these islanders. What shall we say, Caroline? Can we give up the child to Lord Chetwynd?”

The two eager young faces turned pleadingly to Mrs. Gwellan. She yielded to the mute prayer, and assented to the minister's question.

“ One word, then, Lord Chetwynd,” said Mr. Gwellan, as the young lord would have poured forth his gratitude—“ only one word. Before this matter is decided, let me tell you all we know about our dear child. She is not of our blood. We do not know who she is, nor whence she came. We believe her to be of English birth, but beyond that we know nothing about her. We have lived on this island some twenty years. Fourteen years ago—it was October then as now—an English yacht, much like yours put into our bay at nightfall. She sailed at daybreak. We never knew her name. The night was dark and misty. A boat put off from the yacht, bringing ashore a gentleman with a sleeping child, a mere baby of two years, in his arms. He found his way to the manse, and demanded a private interview with me. He told me that the little child was an orphan, and he desired to leave her in the care of my wife and myself. He desired us to bring her up as our own child. He said that she was of

gentle birth, and must be educated carefully and thoroughly. He said that he would return and reclaim her within five years, and he left a large sum of money for her support. He sailed, as I said, at dawn. The five years passed, and he did not come. Other years went by, and now fourteen are passed, and we have never heard of or from him."

"Strange!" said Lord Chetwynd. "What was his name?"

"He gave the name of South, but we think that may have been an assumed name."

"Did you think him the father of the child?"

"Yes—and no. He said she was an orphan, but he embraced her when he went away, straining her little form to him in a sort of anguish and despair. He was evidently a gentleman, but one who had known some terrible sorrow that had wrecked his life."

"Why did he never return to claim his child?"

"We think he must have died before the time he had appointed for his return," said Mr. Gwellan. "He never came, never sent any message; surely he must have died. We have brought Bernice up, as he directed, as our own child. He called her Bernice South, but desired me to give her my own surname, which I did, having a conviction that he had not given me her true name. But the little creature was so pale and wan, so shy and sweet and winning, that my poor wife, who mourned our childlessness, took to her at once, and begged to be allowed to keep her. Bernice has been a sacred charge to us, and our hearts will be sore when she shall have gone. But has not this recital of our girl's history warned you to pause, my lord, in this matter which is to control your whole future life? English noblemen are wont to be more prudent in their marriages. Bernice is herself pure and noble, and she will have no relatives

turning up at inconvenient times to annoy you ; but she has no stately name, no long line of ancestry—so far as we know. It is possible even, that were her true history known, you might shrink from her.”

“I suppose it is your duty to say all this to me, Mr. Gwellan,” said the young marquis impatiently, “but I am no cold-blooded man to consider the dictates of worldly prudence instead of the promptings of my own heart. As to descent, Bernice and I are alike descended from one common ancestor. Bernice is worthy to be a queen. I love her, and I again entreat your consent to our marriage.”

Mr. Gwellan yielded to his lordship's impassioned pleading, and the next day the young pair were married in the little church and immediately set sail for home on the yacht.

The old minister and his wife stood on the stormy beach, and watched the dim outlines of the vessel with weeping eyes.

“It is hard to let her go,” sobbed Mrs. Gwellan, clinging to her husband's arm ; “but we are old, David, and it is best. Whatever happens to us, our darling is provided for.”

It was an enchanted voyage to the young Marquis and Marchioness of Chetwynd, from St. Kilda to the shores of Scotland.

They arrived at Inverness one rainy morning, and the young couple quitted the yacht, proceeding to a hotel. Lord Chetwynd gave directions that the *Sylvia* should proceed at once to Portsmouth, while he continued his journey homeward quite leisurely by rail, with his bride.

The first express train to the southward bore the Marquis and Marchioness on their way to Edinburgh,

where they arrived in the course of a few hours, going directly to the Royal Hotel.

The pair were installed in their apartments at once.

Bernice tossed aside her antiquated straw bonnet, of a fashion long extinct, and walked to one of the windows looking out upon Princess street Gardens with eager curiosity.

"How very strange everything is!" she said, with a long breath. "See how short and scanty the dresses of the women are; and how strangely they dress their hair, and what queer little bonnets they wear. Oh, Roy, I feel so different from them. I shall not dare walk in the streets," and Bernice gave a glance down at her full straight gown. "I wonder you ever wanted me, Roy I'm such a contrast to the ladies here."

The young lord smiled, and drew her slight figure to him, and they looked out of the window together.

"I have secured a jewel of rare value, Bernice," he said, tenderly, "and a suitable setting can be easily procured. To-morrow we will proceed to transform my gray little chrysalis into a gay little butterfly. We shall stay at Edinburgh a week, interspersing the duties of shopping with the delights of sight-seeing, and then we shall go down to our home in Sussex. I shall write this very evening to my step-brother and sister, informing them of our marriage, and asking them to prepare a proper reception for us. The Marchioness of Chetwynd must not arrive at her husband's house like any mere guest."

The programme thus hinted was acted upon.

Dinner was served to the pair in their own private sitting-room. After the table had been cleared, the marquis produced writing materials, and engaged upon a long and confidential letter to his connections, detail-

ing the fact and circumstances of his marriage in the rapturous language of a happy bridegroom.

"How surprised they will be to hear that I am married!" said the young lord, pausing in his task to look lovingly into the piquant face at his side. "And how pleased they will be! I am not particularly fond of Gilbert Monk, little Bernice; but he is devoted to me and my interests, and my mother liked him. But Sylvia is as dear to me as if she were my own sister."

"Is she beautiful?" asked Bernice, in a tone of interest.

"She is considered very handsome," answered the marquis, "but she does not quite answer to my ideal of absolute beauty. She is a loving, clinging, dependent sort of girl, essentially feminine, thoroughly refined, and a perfect lady. I hope you will love her, Bernice. I want her to feel that our home is hers, and that she has a sacred right there, and I know you will share my wish. Since my mother's death I have given Sylvia—as the sister—an annual allowance of two hundred pounds, her own private income being only half that amount. I fancy that Sylvia knows no difference of affection between that she feels for her brother and that for me."

"I am sure I shall love her," said Bernice, with a little flush of enthusiasm. "I never had a sister nor a girl friend, Roy, and I have always longed for one. I wonder you did not love Miss Monk as you love me," she added smiling. "I wonder you did not marry her, Roy, instead of marrying a little nobody from St. Kilda."

Lord Chetwynd's face flushed as he responded:

"I had only a brother's love for Sylvia, and she, of course, had only a sister's love for me. I have been away from Chetwynd most of the time since my mother's death, and have therefore seen but little of my

step-sister during the last year. But certainly, dearly as I esteem Sylvia, she does not at all answer to my ideal of a wife—as you do, little Bernice.”

The next day Lord Chetwynd escorted his young bride upon a shopping expedition. Bernice had never been in a shop in her life—had never even seen one—but the knowledge she had derived from books and from Mrs. Gwellan stood her in place of experiences, and she was not guilty of a single awkwardness or mistake. She had a pure and refined taste, a natural predilection for elegant attire, and a love of rich and dainty fabrics, and these all found full gratification now for the first time. The day was spent among the varied glories of milliners and dressmakers, and before night the quaint little nun-like girl of St. Kilda was transformed into a fashionably attired young lady.

The young marquis was delighted with the transformation. Even her changed attire could not impart beauty to the small, dark, passionate face; but the brilliant eyes, the high-bred patrician air, the upright carriage of the lithe, straight and slender figure, were all striking and awakened Lord Chetwynd's pride in her.

Upon the afternoon of the fourth day, as the young couple were seated in their own parlor, the marquis said :

“To-morrow we will continue our journey to London, Bernice; and to-day, little wife, make your prettiest toilet, for I have a fancy that Gilbert Monk will arrive in time to dine with us. He will be all impatience to see you, I know, and will not await our coming at the Park.”

A knock was heard at the door, and a servant entered, bearing an envelope on a salver. The enve-

lope inclosed a telegraphic dispatch, which the marquis hastily read.

"I was right," he announced, with a beaming face. "Gilbert is on his way to us. He will be here in an hour."

CHAPTER II.

THE SERPENTS IN THE DOVE'S NEST.

Chetwynd Park is one of the grandest estates in Sussex, comprising nearly two thousand acres of some of the finest soil in England, divided into well-tilled farms, oak and beach forests, and the vast and finely kept park from which the estate derives its name. It has a mile or more of frontage upon the English Channel, including a picturesque bay, shut in by tall chalk cliffs, and a strip of open, sloping beach.

The mansion—the family residence of the Chetwynds for centuries—is a grand and stately pile, irregular, of great extent, and striking in appearance. It is of mixed styles of architecture, having been built, tower by tower, and wing by wing, during hundreds of years.

The gray October afternoon was waning when a girl came out of the great house, and began walking back and forth upon the marble terrace which overlooked the Channel. She was dressed in a heavy crimson silk, which trailed after her in ruddy waves upon the white marble pavement, and was wrapped in an ermine jacket, wearing upon her head a little low-crowned hat, covered with nodding plumes. Her movements were full of a sinuous, serpentine grace. She glided rather

than walked, her manner of progression suggesting that of a graceful snake.

This girl was Sylvia Monk, the step-sister of the young Marquis of Chetwynd.

Miss Monk was beautiful, after a singular and somewhat remarkable type. She was a brunette, but as unlike Bernice as could well be imagined. She was dark to swarthy, with lips and cheeks of burning crimson. Her jet-black hair grew low upon her forehead, and was drawn away in heavy rolls and bands. Her eyes were not large, and were half hidden by the heavy brown lids above them, but a line of intense black might be seen between the thick fringes. They were sleepy eyes, but upon occasion they could open wide, and flash and gleam, and then would be noticed the odd red flicker, like the glimmer of a living spark of fire, in the dull blackness. She was gentle, refined, and her manners were full of a tender, caressing sweetness. She had inherited her father's power of fascination in a remarkable degree.

She paused by the low carved marble balustrade of the terrace, and gazed out upon the Channel with longing in her half-shut eyes. She seemed to be looking for an expected sail, and was so absorbed in contemplation that she did not turn nor start when a man's tread sounded behind her on the terrace, and a man approached her, coming also from the house.

This man was her brother, Gilbert Monk.

He was a short, stout, squarely built young fellow, with a swarthy face, and quick, restless black eyes. The lower half of his face was masked by a heavy black, silky beard. He was low-browed like his sister, but he had not her gentleness, softness, and insinuating sweetness. To the contrary, he was brusque, and affected a boisterous frankness and boyish *bonhomie*, and was gen-

erally considered a rollicking, thoughtless, good-natured over-grown boy.

"Looking out for the *Sylvia*, as usual?" he exclaimed, coming near his sister. "You look in vain, my dear. Don't be a high-flown goose, *Sylvia*. I can make all allowance for lovers, although I have never experienced the tender passion myself, but there is such a thing as reason, and there is also such a thing as common-sense. I don't like to see you pining for the marquis—"

"Why should I not pine for him?" interposed Miss Monk, in her silvery voice. "Am I not his promised wife? Were we not betrothed at his mother's death-bed? Are we not engaged to be married?"

"You were engaged to him, true enough, but all that is over, and you ought to realize the fact," said Gilbert Monk, in a tantalizing tone, as if it delighted him to disturb the soft gentleness of Miss Monk's habitual manner. "You must remember that six months ago, you took Lord Chetwynd to task for his coldness and want of devotion to you, and that a lover's quarrel ensued, and the result was the engagement between you was annulled, and he went cruising off to Norway. He is free, *Sylvia*, free to marry anybody he may happen to fall in love with. I must say you have been as foolish as a woman can be. You might have been Marchioness of Chetwynd to-day, if you hadn't quarrelled with my lord. You might have had your house in town, your villa at Mentone, your box in the Highlands, but you flung them all from you in a fit of pique, because their owner did not fall at your feet and worship you."

"I have not lost all these things, Gilbert," said Miss Monk, quietly. "I know my power over Roy. I nursed his mother through her last fatal illness, and Roy, who adored his mother, will never cease to be grateful for it. Roy never loved me, except as a sister, but his

mother desired him to marry me, and he promised her he would. When I foolishly tried my power over him and offered him his freedom, he accepted it with an eagerness I did not expect; but he will come back to me loving, repentant, and we shall be lovers again."

"Perhaps so," said the young man, doubtfully. "But what if Roy has made use of his freedom to fall in love with some fair Norwegian or Swedish girl? Heaven knows where he is all these months. Fishing and cruising can't occupy him all this time."

Miss Monk's red cheeks faded slightly.

"You delight to torture me, Gilbert," she exclaimed. "Why, although I released him from our engagement, he must feel bound to me still. I have never regarded that solemn betrothal at his mother's death-bed as dissolved. He would not dare to marry. If he were to dare, I—I—"

The sudden red gleam from her opening eyes finished her sentence with dread effectiveness.

Gilbert Monk uttered a boyish whistle.

"When Roy comes home," resumed Sylvia, after a pause, "I shall take an early occasion to let him know that I consider our engagement binding; and I shall hurry up the marriage."

"You can't hurry it up too much to suit me," declared her brother, with sudden earnestness. "I am beset with creditors. I want money, and I sought you to-day in the hope of being able to borrow a few pounds."

"I am nearly out of money myself. When I become Lady Chetwynd I will settle a handsome annuity upon you, Gilbert. As it is, my poor little income is hard run upon by both of us."

The sound of horse's hoofs on the avenue caught

Gilbert Monk's attention. He looked in that direction.

"The steward is come with the mail-bag," he exclaimed. "See! he waves his hat. He must have the long-expected letter from Chetwynd. Good news, Sylvia. Your lover is on his way home at last. I'll bring you your letter."

He ran along the terrace like a boy and bounded down the massive flight of steps, hurrying toward the avenue. The steward came up, delivered to him the locked post-bag, and rode around to the stables. Monk returned to his sister.

Sylvia had retreated to a low marble bench between two potted orange trees, and was awaiting him with agitation and anxiety. The key of the post-bag hung upon her watch-chain. She unlocked the bag with eager and trembling fingers, and plunged in both hands in quest of the expected prize.

Several newspapers, a half-dozen dunning letters addressed to Gilbert Monk, were withdrawn and flung to the ground, and then, last of all came the letter Lord Chetwynd had sent from Edinburgh announcing his marriage.

Sylvia caught up this missive, recognized the handwriting, and pressed it to her lips.

"It is addressed to me," she whispered, "It is post-marked Edinburgh. See the date. He is coming home. Oh, Roy, my love, my love!"

"Would it not be better to postpone this frantic joy until you discover what he says?" asked Monk, cynically. "Of course he writes as a lover, but consider my impatience to learn the fact. I am anxious to know if I am to be brother-in-law to a marquis or not."

The girl tore open the letter, and her gleaming eyes sought to devour its contents.

“ ‘ My dear brother and sister,’ ” she read. “ Brother and sister ! What does that mean ? ”

“ We can probably ascertain by reading further. The letter is addressed to you, yet seems to have the air of a family communication. Perhaps he's been wrecked or sick. Read on.”

“ ‘ My dear brother and sister.’ Oh, that is so strange ! How dare he call me sister—I, who am his betrothed wife ? ”

“ Give me the letter. We shall never get on at this rate. And the letter is written as much to me as to you. Let me read it.”

Monk seized the closely written sheet, and proceeded to read it aloud in an impetuous voice :

“ ‘ You must have wondered at my long absence, and more still at my long silence. But I have been beyond the reach of Her Majesty's postal facilities. I wrote you from Norway, informing you of my then whereabouts. Leaving Norway, I visited the Shetland Isles, and while there, fell in with a Scottish clergyman, who urged me to pay a visit to the romantic island of St. Kilda, a mere rock in the Atlantic, a hundred miles to the westward of the Hebridean Island of Lewis. This clergyman, who had, strangely enough, known my father in their early manhood, gave me a letter of introduction to his sister and brother-in-law, Mrs. and the Rev. David Gwellan, the latter being pastor of St. Kilda. Longing for a dash of adventure, and caring little whither I went, I sailed for St. Kilda, arriving there early in August. I remained there until last week. As the island is inhabited by one of the most primitive people in the world, you will wonder what attraction held me there for two months. How can I explain without seeming to you fickle and inconstant ?

But since Sylvia so generously gave me back my troth-plight, declaring that we were not suited to each other, I need not hesitate to avow the truth. The Rev. David Gwellan had an adopted daughter—”

“Ah!” interpolated Miss Monk, in a fierce, sibilant whisper. “A daughter! And he fell in love with her! Oh, Heaven! But he shall not marry her, *I* swear it!”

Gilbert Monk looked curiously at the low-browed, swarthy face, from which the glow was slowly fading, and then resumed :

“An adopted daughter, about seventeen years old, a pure, bright, lovely girl, well educated, well bred—in short, a perfect lady. Sylvia was right. Our betrothal, entered into at the entreaty of my dying mother, and adhered to by her and me from a sense of duty, had all been wrong. Sylvia and I love each other as brother and sister, and while I live Sylvia shall be to me as my own sister, with a sister’s right in my home and a sister’s place in my heart. I made use of my newly-acquired freedom to woo this lovely island girl. I could not bear to come away and leave her. And so, my dear brother and sister—do you not guess the truth?—Bernice and I were married at St. Kilda last Thursday, and my bride is with me now at Edinburgh, and I raise my eyes from this paper to look upon her dear face—”

“Married!” said Miss Monk, with a stifled shriek. “Married?”

“Married!” echoed Gilbert Monk, in a sort of stupefaction, looking down upon the shaking paper in his hands. “He says married. I—I can’t believe it!”

“Married—to a baby of seventeen! He is fooling us.”

She arose and tottered to the balustrade, gasping for air. Her dark face was livid and gray, and the look of agony in her fiery eyes, and the contraction of her beetling brows showed the awful tempest that raged in her soul.

She loved Roy Lord Chetwynd with all her soul, all the strength of her strong nature. All her ambitions, too, and they were many, were bound up in her intended marriage with him. And now at one fell blow, love and ambitions were rendered alike vain. The man for whom she would have given her soul was married to another!

"I felt so sure of him!" she said in a choked voice. "I was vain of my power. I never dreamed he would really take me at my word and leave me. Does he say nothing more, Gilbert? Read on."

"There is but little more," said Monk. "He is stopping in Edinburgh to show his bride the sights, and to fit up her wardrobe. He is coming home within a week—will telegraph in advance—would like me to come to meet him. Here is something especially to you. He says you have no doubt destroyed his letters, and he begs you to forget all the past, and your duty betrothal to him. He has not told Lady Chetwynd of that engagement, out of delicacy and respect to you. Bernice—that's her name—is prepared to love you, and he begs you to be a dear elder sister to his little girl. And, in conclusion, he wants us to prepare a grand reception for his bride's home-coming—to ring the joy-bells, rouse up the tenantry, and so on. And, yes—Bernice sends her love. That's all."

Gilbert Monk crushed the letter in his hands, uttering a series of curses so terrible as to rouse even his despairing sister.

"So end my hopes of a rich marriage, and so end

yours!" he ejaculated. "My Lady Chetwynd will send me adrift at an early date. But you will be allowed to remain, my proud Sylvia, as the poor dependent, to humor my lady's whim, to dance attendance on her spoiled child notions, to teach her propriety and the customs of civilized life. An adopted daughter of an island pastor—a mere nobody—the child of some rude fisher or fowler of St. Kilda, perhaps—a nobody in truth, since her own parentage is not mentioned. Think of a chit of seventeen ruling at Chetwynd Park! She will consider you venerable at twenty-two. And she has only to say a word to Chetwynd to set him against you. Curse her! Ten thousand curses on her!"

Sylvia Monk drooped her heavy lids over her red and glittering eyes. Her gray face looked ten years older, with all the color stricken from it. Her low forehead was shadowed with a thunder-cloud of rage and hatred.

"He says he has not told Bernice—is that her name?—of our former betrothal," Miss Monk said hoarsely. "He keeps the secret from chivalrous regard for me. He does not care to have his bride know that he could have married me had he chosen, and that I wear the willow for his sake. I appreciate his delicacy. I wonder what Lady Chetwynd would say if she were to see his letters to me? If she has a spark of woman nature in her childish heart, I can drive her mad with jealousy. Shall I suffer alone? I will embitter her life and his, and he shall never suspect my agency. I will—why, there's murder in my heart!" and she struck at her bosom with one jewelled hand, and her eyes were full of evil glow. "An hour ago, and I was full of dreams and plans of what I would do when I should become Lady Chetwynd. And now I am but the poor dependent. Should Lady Chetwynd choose to drive me hence, I have no home—I must inevitably become a govern-

ess, or sink into some cheap obscurity on my hundred pounds a year. Do you think I will endure this? I tell you there's an awakened demon within me that cries for revenge—revenge!" and she dwelt upon the word in a prolonged sibilant whisper, as if it sounded sweet to her.

"Revenge! Bah! Will revenge give you a brilliant position like this your mad folly threw away? Revenge! You had better talk of retreating to a nunnery, or get a situation to teach in a girls' school. You might have been a marchioness but you flung your chance away. Shall we go away from Chetwynd Park like two discharged servants before my lord and my lady come home? I think it might be better to hasten our retreat into the obscurity to which we shall henceforth belong."

"I do not. I shall stay at Chetwynd Park until I become its mistress. You stare. I told you that you do not know me. No nameless chit shall rob me of my love. Oh, Roy! do you think I will tamely allow her to stand between me and the gaol of my love and ambition?"

"What will you do, then?"

A change came over Miss Monk's face—a look so strange, so fierce, so deadly, so menacing, that even Gilbert Monk started back in affright.

"What I shall do remains to be seen," she answered, in a serpent-like hiss. "I shall not take you too deeply into my secrets, Gilbert. Old Ragee, my Hindu nurse, is all the friend I need. But of one thing you may rest assured—my plans of grandeur are not frustrated, only delayed. I swear to you that in fifteen months from this very day I shall be the second Lady Chetwynd."

"But how? I can't understand—"

She interrupted him with an imperative gesture, and

a look that showed her to be the more daring soul and the leading mind of the two.

"Ask me no questions, but obey me implicitly, and your prosperity is assured with mine. We must prepare a grand reception for our happy pair, and you must go to meet them at Edinburgh. You must win the friendship of my lady:" and Miss Monk sneered. "Go to them, and leave all the rest to me. Make your arrangements at once for their reception. Give orders to the bailiff, the steward, the butler. I will summon the housekeeper to a conference. And when all is ready, telegraph to Lord Chetwynd and be off to Scotland, leaving me in charge here. That is all, I think. I will leave you now, and you can impart to the household the happy news of the marquis's marriage."

She turned away and swept across the terrace swiftly, but still with sinuous, serpent-like rush, mounted the grand ascent of marble steps, and disappeared within the house.

"I wouldn't stand in Sylvia Monk's way for a fortune," said Gilbert Monk to himself, gazing after his sister, and giving an involuntary shudder. "Sylvia has been so long under old Ragee's tutelage that she sets no value whatever on human life, except it is her own. What is she going to do? She means mischief, that is plain. In India, among the natives, human life is held as cheap as rush-light, and Sylvia has imbibed from her old nurse many of the peculiar ideas of old Ragee. Can it be— But it's none of my concern. Sylvia shall manage her affairs to suit herself without my interference, although I shall be ready to share the profits. Only I would not insure the life of Bernice Lady Chetwynd at any risk. And now to do as I am told—to call together the servants and tell them that Lord Chetwynd is married—and not to Sylvia."

He straightened out the crumpled letter and went into the house.

He called together the steward and the butler, and briefly told them the important news. The household at the Park had known of the engagement of marriage that had existed between the Marquis and Miss Monk, and had not been told that the engagement had been broken. The surprise, therefore, of the ruling servitors, on being told of the marriage of his lordship to a lady of whom they had never even heard, may be imagined, and their curious glances stung Gilbert Monk into a sort of sullen fury, which he concealed as best he might under an exaggeration of his usual boyish off-hand manner.

He went to the house of the bailiff, and communicated to him also the news.

He gave orders that a grand reception should be prepared for the home-coming of the marquis and marchioness, and superintended the arrangements himself. The next day he went up to London, and proceeded by an early train to Scotland, telegraphing, as we have seen, to Lord Chetwynd that he was on his way northward.

"I may as well seem friendly and congratulatory, and all that," he thought, as he neared his destination. "Better mask one's real feelings, especially when they are such as mine. I can safely leave Sylvia to avenge her wrongs and retrieve her lost position. By George! I wish I knew exactly what she's plotting. But one thing I do know: Better for Bernice Gwellan had she lived and died at St. Kilda! Her marriage with Lord Chetwynd will prove fatal to her!"



CHAPTER III.

HOLLOW CONGRATULATIONS.

About an hour after the receipt by Lord Chetwynd of the telegram announcing the speedy intended arrival of his step-brother in Edinburgh, Gilbert Monk drove up in a cab to the door of the Royal Hotel in that city, alighted, and was shown up at once to a room that had been ordered and prepared for him.

His first proceeding was to remove from his person all the dust of travel, and to attire himself in a dress suit. Then he summoned a servant to conduct him to Lord Chetwynd's apartments, and announced himself by a heavy double knock.

It was the marquis himself who came to the door, giving him admittance.

Gilbert Monk had expected to find a certain embarrassment and constraint in his lordship's manner, but he was disappointed. Lord Chetwynd received him with an honest, earnest cordiality, and evidently without the faintest remembrance at the moment of the broken engagement of marriage with Sylvia.

"I am glad to see you, Gilbert," he exclaimed, extending his hand, his blue eyes lighting up in warmth of welcome.

Monk approached the fire, with a curious glance about the room. The young marchioness was not

BERNICE GWELLAN WATCHING THE APPROACH OF LORD CHETWYND.—See Chapter I.



there, and he again extended his hand to Lord Chetwynd, saying :

“You have overwhelmed all your friends with surprise, my lord. Accept my congratulations. You look a happy benedict, and I wish you and Lady Chetwynd long and happy lives. Sylvia desired me to bring you her love, and to tell you that she is all impatience to see her new sister. Sylvia’s joy in your happiness is as great as her surprise at your marriage. She is prepared to adore Lady Chetwynd.”

The marquis’s fair face flushed with pleasure.

“I believe that Bernice and Sylvia will be like two sisters,” he said.

“Who would have believed six months ago that you would be married to-day?” remarked Gilbert Monk, sentimentally. “And you’ve married all for love, like King Cophetua when he married the beggar maid. Young husbands are always lovers, and in your eyes, at least, Lady Chetwynd is perfect. That is as it should be. Don’t frown at me so blackly, Chetwynd. You said yourself in your letter that she is the adopted daughter of the minister of St. Kilda. I take it for granted, of course, that she is the child of some native fisherman or egg-hunter whom the Gwellans adopted on account of her beauty or intelligence.”

Lord Chetwynd frowned and took a turn or two across the floor. Monk watched him with his boyish smile, but presently his lordship’s face cleared, and he came back, saying :

“My letter has evidently given you a false impression, Gilbert, and I desire to rectify it before you see my wife. Lady Chetwynd comes of gentle blood, and is not a native of St. Kilda. I may as well say now to you, in confidence, that my dear wife was taken to St. Kilda in her infancy by her father in his own private

yacht. Her father was a gentleman named South. He engaged Mrs. Gwellan to take charge of his child for a certain period, declaring that he would return for her, but he never came. He probably died."

"I should think to the contrary of that. Having rid himself of the child, he was prepared to live. Depend upon it, Chetwynd, if your wife is of good family, her claims come under the bar sinister. She was taken to St. Kilda as to a living grave. I am obliged to you for the confidence you have reposed in me, and I shall guard the secret as my own, for certainly I would not have our censorious world know of the blot upon her ladyship's escutcheon. It is well that your mantle of pedigree is so ample that it will cover all her shortcomings."

Every word spoken so carelessly by Gilbert Monk was a dagger-wound to Lord Chetwynd, and so the wily speaker intended.

"It is nearly our dinner-hour, and Lady Chetwynd is probably ready to join us," said the marquis, coldly. "Excuse me while I go to her."

He bowed and withdrew into an adjoining chamber.

Monk looked after him with a baleful smile.

"I have planted the first thorns among his roses," he thought, with evil exultation. "I thought he had no pride of birth, but I find a little tenderness on the subject, after all. That allusion to the 'bar sinister' proved effective. How he winced under it! It is easy to see that he loves the girl to madness, and—"

The door of the inner room opened, and Lord Chetwynd re-appeared, with his young wife on his arm.

Gilbert Monk started forward with uncontrollable eagerness, but no vision of beauty met his gaze. He beheld only a slender young girl, with a thin, dark face,

a brown, gypsy complexion, clearly-cut features, and a broad, low brow, shaded by masses of crinkling black hair, which fell in lustrous waves touched with purple bloom far below her waist. His first sensation was of amazement that Lord Chetwynd could have given up Sylvia Monk for a girl like this; but when Bernice approaching him and clinging gracefully to the arm of her young husband, upraised to him her marvellous eyes, all glowing like stars, he felt the spell of her wonderful fascination, and recognized in her a radiance of soul powerful enough to glorify even her plain features.

The youthful marchioness was attired in full dinner costume of maize-colored silk with over-dress of white lace and ornaments of yellow topaz. She was not awkward nor embarrassed, but bore herself with that quiet self-possession and self-unconsciousness that are everywhere recognized as the truest indices of thorough good-breeding.

"Bernice," said the young marquis, "allow me to present to you my step-brother, Gilbert Monk. Gilbert, this is my dear wife, Lady Chetwynd."

The girlish, gypsy-looking bride held out her hand frankly, and Monk pressed it warmly, uttering wishes for her happiness which seemed genuine and heartfelt. He exerted himself to make a favorable impression upon Bernice, and was successful, the island-bred girl being by nature as unsuspecting and generous as she was frank and impulsive.

In half an hour they were apparently fast friends, Bernice accepting Monk as a brother, and treating him with a charming yet unconscious familiarity that delighted him.

The three dined together in the cosy parlor, and spent the evening in conversation. Monk was boyish, whimsical, and full of drolleries. He entertained the

young marchioness with anecdotes of her husband's boyhood, and described Chetwynd Park after a graphic fashion, and was full of humorous sayings, seeming more than ever like a great overgrown boy, overflowing with life and spirits.

Bernice, frank and unsuspecting as a little child, liked him from the first. At ten o'clock Monk withdrew to his own room.

"I've made a good beginning," he said to himself, caressing his beard as he surveyed his reflection complacently in the mirror of his dressing bureau. "The girl has a strange power to charm, and I'll stake my soul she's as pure and innocent as an angel, even in her inmost thoughts. It is as if she had come from a nunnery. She knows nothing of the world, and suspects no evil. She is no match for Sylvia, and will go down before her like the corn before the reaper; and yet there is that in her eyes and face that declares that she will defend herself to the death. If it were not for Sylvia, and the fact of my own altered position, I'd be inclined to make friends with Lady Chetwynd. But as it is, I'll win her friendship, and use it to further my own interests. And one thing is sure, I cannot interfere with Sylvia's plans for our mutual aggrandizement."

In accordance with Lord Chetwynd's plans, the party left Edinburgh the next morning for London. They proceeded to a quiet West End hotel, Chetwynd House being closed, and remained in town nearly a week, shopping, sight-seeing, and receiving calls. Monk wrote twice during this interval to Sylvia, and received one dainty missive in return, which, as its writer had intended, he showed to Lady Chetwynd. It was, of course, a model letter, full of kindly expressions in regard to the young marchioness, and her ladyship was touched by it.

At length, due notice having been sent of their intended speedy arrival, the little party resumed its journey to Chetwynd Park.

"We are almost there," whispered the marquis, as his bride looked eagerly from the window of the coach.

"We are almost home, little wife."

"Almost home!" echoed Bernice, a thrill in her voice, and a glint of happiness in her dusky eyes.

"Oh! Roy, my life lies all before me here! What is it to be?"

A telegraphic message to Miss Monk had announced the hour of the coming of the bridal party. Mr. Sanders, the bailiff, received a similar dispatch, and in good time set out in the barouche for Eastbourne, a drive of ten miles, followed by a spring cart which was to bring back Lady Chetwynd's maid and luggage. The servants were all in new livery of green and gold, and wore bridal favors on their coats.

Miss Monk watched the imposing equipage as it dashed down the avenue with a bitter pang of envy and regret. But for her own jealous anger of months ago, this barouche might have been proceeding to Eastbourne to bring her back from the station upon her return from her bridal tour. The thought nearly maddened her, and she glided away to her own room with a desperate soul and a face of chalk-like pallor.

"I am well punished for my wild folly in breaking my engagement!" she muttered. "But I could not believe he would take me at my word. And now I must make ready to receive another in the position I meant to occupy. Oh, this is bitterer than death!"

Her haggard eyes, no longer half-shut, but wild and glittering, roved about the room. She was alone, but she had barely discovered the fact when the door opened, and her old nurse came into the room.

"Is it you, Ragee?" inquired Miss Monk, listlessly. "It is time to dress, I suppose. But how can I dress to meet *his* wife?" and her tone grew suddenly fierce. "I will not—I will not—"

"Oh hush, Missy," interrupted Ragee, soothingly. "There you go into one of those fits of passion that are wasting your strength and killing you. You have scarcely slept at night since the ill news came, and you rage like a mad woman whenever you are alone. Are you going to be weak and quietly sink into the place of dependent—you who have the beauty of a queen, my darling? Or will you rise up and be mistress of yourself and the fate of this low-born Lady Chetwynd? Bah! I see you have really no spirit. There is no obstacle between you and Lord Chetwynd that your own hand—or mine—cannot set aside."

The old woman came nearer and bent forward her withered, brown face, thrusting it under the drooping one of Miss Monk, and the Hindu's eyes shot strange fire into the orbs of her mistress.

Sylvia Monk sprang upright like a bow from which the strain is loosened. The red fire leaped to her eyes; the red stain to her cheeks and lips.

"You are right, Ragee," she exclaimed. "I am childish to fret at an obstacle in my way which can easily be removed. But I will be weak no longer. Dress me. I must look my best. I will not appear haggard by the side of Chetwynd's young bride, nor shall her beauty dim mine. Quickly, Ragee—my most becoming dress."

The Hindu woman smiled approval, and hastened to obey. She was old and thin, with a skin like ancient parchment, seamed with wrinkles, and of dark-brown hue approaching to blackness. Her small eyes were like polished jet beads. Her scanty hair was hidden by

a red turban, and she wore a clinging gown of Indian silk, and sandals on her feet. She was a weird, witch-like woman, and was regarded by the servants at the Park with a mysterious awe and fear. As Hindu ayahs are not uncommon in England in the families of returned East Indians, her attendance upon Miss Monk, who had been her nursling, excited no comment, scarcely any surprise.

She proceeded to dress her mistress, and when she had finished, exclaimed, exultantly :

“There ! Lord Chetwynd won’t bring a handsomer woman to Chetwynd Park, and he’ll be sick at heart of his fisher-girl when he sees you, missy. Why, you look like a queen !”

The comparison was not inapt. Miss Monk was robed in a velvet of a purple shade, which admirably relieved the swarthiness of her complexion. Her dress was made with a court train, which was trimmed with ermine, and trailed in heavy, voluminous waves on the carpet. Her corsage, open at the throat, was edged with a narrow band of ermine, above which rose a filmy frill of point lace. A fall of similar lace shaded her hands. Her waist was encircled by a belt of flexible gold, and a string of rubies adorned her neck. Her hair shaded heavily her serpent-like forehead, and she wore a quaint tiara of golden stars. The chalky whiteness of her face still remained unchanged, save in the cheeks, where a glowing red was burning ; but the fiery spark glittered in her dull, black eyes, and the serpent grace of her movements was more manifest than ever. She was indeed like the cobra, beautiful, sinuous, undulating—deadly.

“Hark !” she whispered, upraising her hand in an unconsciously theatrical gesture. “Do you hear them ? The bells of Chetwynd are ringing the bridal peal.

The sound is maddening. No, no ; don't speak to me, Ragee. I am calm ; I shall not give way to one of my white rages at this moment, when I need my self-possession ; I must be ready to receive the bridal pair."

Miss Monk passed out into the hall, consumed with envy and bitterness of spirit. She hated herself, Bernice, Chetwynd, the whole world, in that moment of humiliation.

She descended to the lower hall. The joy-bells of the little hamlet of Chetwynd-by-the-Sea, a mile distant, were still ringing a merry chime. The hamlet was owned by the marquis, and its population had turned out to do honor to his marriage. The villagers were beginning to arrive in the grounds, and the servants were assembling in the great marble hall. The butler, in his dress suit, took charge of the dozen male servants, and Mrs. Skewer, the housekeeper, in her best gown and cap, with pink ribbons, headed her array of cooks and house-maids, comprising another dozen at least.

A great hush fell upon the groups of servants as Miss Monk glided down the grand staircase. They all remembered that she was to have been Marchioness of Chetwynd, and they looked at her with curious and pitying eyes. But she passed between the parallel ranks as not seeing them, and entered the drawing-room, closing the door behind her.

The lodge gates were open, and presently the barouche came through them into the avenue and rolled slowly in the shadow of the trees toward the great house.

As the vehicle approached the carriage porch, Miss Monk essayed to go out to meet the new arrivals, but she was suddenly strengthless. Her courage had for the moment deserted her. Her breath came hot and

quick ; her eyes glared ; her heart beat like the pounding of a hammer. She heard the bridal party enter the hall ; she heard the voice of Lord Chetwynd uttering a brief greeting to his household and introducing the Lady of Chetwynd ; she heard a faint cheer from the servants ; she heard footsteps approaching the drawing-room.

Then she rose up, and by a supreme effort, called a false smile to her face and a welcoming look to her loathing eyes.

The door opened and the marquis came in with his bride. Sylvia Monk swept forward, that false smile on her lips, that false light in her eyes, and with a cry of ecstasy she flung herself upon Lord Chetwynd's breast, exclaiming :

"Oh, Roy, my brother, welcome home !"

The Marquis kissed her with a brother's fondness, and released her, just as Mr. Sanders, the bailiff, and Gilbert Monk appeared at the door.

"Sylvia," said the young lord taking her by the hand, "I have brought you a sister. It will make me happy to have you two, who are both so dear to me, love each other. Bernice, this is Sylvia, whom you have so longed to see—my dear sister Sylvia."

Miss Monk drew back and surveyed her successful rival in one long, comprehensive gaze.

Was it for this girl she had been forgotten ? she asked herself—this girl without beauty, except in her wondrous eyes and hair ? Was this slender unformed young creature mistress of Chetwynd Park ?

Bernice looked up at her with an appealing gaze. The girl was dazzled by this splendid, swarthy woman, with her handsome face and regal attire.

"Won't you love me, Sylvia ?" she asked, in a plead-

ing voice. I have always wished for a sister. Will you be mine?"

Miss Monk replied by taking the young bride in her arms and kissing her. Bernice returned the caress with interest, and Chetwynd smiled, believing that they were already friends.

"Let me take you up to your room, Bernice," said Miss Monk, when greetings had been exchanged and questions about the journey from London had been asked and answered. "You look tired. You should lie down for a half-hour's rest before dinner."

She drew Lady Chetwynd's arm in hers and led her from the room, up stairs, to the bridal apartments.

"Are these my rooms?" asked the young marchioness, in surprise and delight. "Oh, they are lovely! How happy I shall be here, Sylvia! I may call you Sylvia, may I not? And you must call me Bernice."

"It's an odd name; at least not common," said Miss Monk. "Is it a Welsh name? I understand your papa is Welsh."

Bernice colored.

"I don't know to what country my name belongs, but I suppose it is English," she replied. "I'll tell you all my story some day, Sylvia. It is not a happy one altogether, but I have hopes and dreams of solving the mystery of it some time. But I am happy now, happy and content. You don't know how good Roy is;" and the young wife's lovely eyes filled with sudden tears. "Oh, Sylvia, I mean to be a good wife to him. I mean to sympathize with all his aspirations, to become a part of his inner self, to be all in all to him, as he is to me. You shall never regret that your brother married a nameless little nobody. I intend Roy shall be proud of me."

A spasm of pain that was not unmarked by Bernice passed over Sylvia's face.

"We—we will talk of all this later," said Miss Monk, hoarsely. "You will want to dress now. I will send your maid to you. I see that you have brought one with you. Your luggage is in the dressing-room."

Excusing herself, Miss Monk hastily withdrew.

Bernice examined her rooms, and dropped into a luxurious fauteuil, as her maid, a Frenchwoman whom Lord Chetwynd had engaged for her in London, upon the recommendation of an elderly lady friend, entered the room. Fifine was a silly gossiping creature, whose professional skill was expected to atone for a great many faults of her tongue and brain.

"Ah, madame," said Fifine, with a long breath, "it's a grand place, this Chetwynd Park. Such suits of rooms, such numbers of servants, such magnificence everywhere! It's a grand thing to be a rich milord. Shall you dress now, milady?"

The bride assented with a little nod.

"And what dress shall it be, my lady?" asked Fifine. "I met Miss Monk in the hall, and she sent me to you. Ah, she looks like a queen in her velvet and ermine. She is only my lord's step-sister, and they say, down in the servant's hall, that that's no relation at all, and that when my lord went away in his yacht he was betrothed to her, and that he played her false and jilted her, all because of a lover's quarrel," continued gossiping Fifine. "And the tall housemaid says that my lord loves her yet, and that this pique will cost him dear. It's a tumult among the servants, my lady, and they are all Miss Monk's friends. You will discharge them all, I suppose. Is it not so, my lady?"

Bernice grew pale. The foolish gossip of the thoughtless maid stabbed her cruelly. Miss Monk's singular

beauty gained by contrast with her own plainness. Roy had never told her a word of his betrothal to Sylvia. A great spasm of jealousy convulsed her passionate young heart. Yet she managed to say, with a certain dignity :

“ You must not come to me with servants’ gossip, Fifine. I do not care to hear what is said in the servants’ hall. Attend to your duties when in my presence, and your duty now is to dress me as soon as possible.”

Fifine’s chattering tongue was silenced, and she proceeded to fulfill her task.

Bernice was soon dressed. Her attire was of bridal white, consisting of a heavy white silk and point-lace overdress, and a full set of the Chetwynd family diamonds—great, liquid measures of radiant light—which glittered on her arms, her neck, her breast, in her ears, and above her streaming waves of hair. The dark, patrician face was still pale, but her brilliant eyes were more radiant and glowing than her diamonds.

“ Now you may go, Fifine,” said Lady Chetwynd ; “ and—stay—send some one to Lord Chetwynd, and say to him that I desire to see him.”

Fifine departed on her errand.

“ It is not so, that Roy was ever betrothed to Miss Monk,” said Bernice to herself, stormily. “ He would have told me. I shall ask him. I will know if he married me in consequence of a lovers’ quarrel.”

She awaited the coming of her young husband in a breathless anxiety.



CHAPTER IV.

INTRIGUE AND JEALOUSY.

The minutes passed, and Lord Chetwynd did not appear in response to the summons of his young wife. A party of friends had arrived at the Park, and he was so engaged with them that the butler, to whom the chattering Fifine had transmitted her message, dared not interrupt him. The youthful marchioness paced her floor impetuously, glancing continuously and impatiently at the little Sevres clock on the low mantel. Her soul seemed on fire. A strange, consuming jealousy possessed her. The thought that her husband, whose love was her life, had loved Miss Monk, had been betrothed to her, and had been bound in honor to marry her, was gall and wormwood to poor, proud young Bernice.

But as the minutes wore on, and the marquis did not come, the impetuous young wife grew calmer. New thoughts crowded in upon her.

"If I have won my husband I can keep him," she said to herself, proudly. "Even if this story from the servants' hall be true, I am weak and foolish to heed it. I must respect myself too much to even hearken to kitchen gossip, and indeed I did not hearken to it. I should be ashamed to tell Roy what I have heard—ashamed to question him upon such a subject. If he

ever loved Miss Monk he is too honorable to give a thought to her now. I can rest upon my husband's love as upon a sure support. He will not fail me."

The thought was like oil upon the troubled waters.

She was herself again, bright and sweet as a sunbeam, when Lord Chetwynd's tread rang through the hall, and the young lord entered her rooms.

Bernice ran to meet him with a kiss.

"Ah, my radiant little bride!" said the young husband, with lover fondness. "I am sorry that I could not come to you before, but I was detained by old friends. Sylvia has made a state dinner party for us, and the guests are already arriving. I must dress immediately. This is to be a grand *fête* in your honor, little wife. Sylvia has done her best to give your arrival *éclat*. And how do you like your new sister, Bernice?"

"She is very handsome," said Bernice, flushing, "and I admire her and like her. Why, she looks like some Eastern queen. I—I wonder, Roy, that you did not marry her instead of me."

The marquis laughed lightly. The remark had no significance to him, and he did not reply to it save by a caress.

"Roy," exclaimed the young wife, with a passionate thrill in her clear, sweet voice, "you love me do you not, better than all the world?"

"Better than all the world," he answered, folding her slender, white-robed figure to him. "You are to me the most beautiful woman in all the world, Bernice, the best, the sweetest the loveliest! There, have I made you any happier, little wife? You must never doubt my love. I could not bear distrust from you. And now I must dress. We will presently go down together."

Bernice slid from his arms in a flutter of happiness, and Lord Chetwynd went to his dressing-room.

The young wife was completely reassured. All her doubts and suspicions had vanished. She sang softly to herself as she stood at the window and watched the line of carriages driving up the avenue, and there was a proud and tender sweetness on her patrician face that was better far than mere beauty of form and coloring.

Lord Chetwynd rejoined her in due time, in full dinner dress.

"I almost fear that this is to be a severe ordeal for you, Bernice," he said, half anxiously. "I wish now that I had deferred all this publicity and dinner-giving until you should have become better used to English life. And yet I need not fear that you will fail in self-possession and graceful ease. I have not seen my little island-girl embarrassed yet. I do not know whether you most surprise or delight me, Bernice. At your age, girls are scarcely out of the nursery in England, but you seem like one used to society."

"The reason is very simple," said Bernice, smiling. "I do not think of myself, Roy. I forget that there is such a person as Bernice Chetwynd, and I do think of others and desire to please and interest them. That's the whole secret of my self-possession, and it's very simple, you see. But our guests are arriving. Ought we not to go down?"

The marquis assented, and offered his bride his arm, and they descended to the drawing-room.

Sylvia monk and her brother were already there, and were engaged in receiving the guests. Both expected the young island-girl of St. Kilda to exhibit a large degree of embarrassment and awkwardness, but both were disappointed. It is quite possible that Miss

Monk had planned the dinner-party with the idea and hope that Bernice, by her timidity and awkwardness, would annoy and anger the marquis, but this hope was doomed to be disappointed. Bernice had a natural tact that stood her in place of knowledge. She had not the courage and address of a woman of the world, not the practiced knowledge of a woman of society, but she was quick-witted and observant, graceful and refined and self-forgetful, and the last characteristic was worth perhaps as much as all the others together.

In short, her first appearance in society was a success, and her husband was proud of her.

The evening passed, as even the happiest evenings will. The guests departed one by one, or in groups. The tenantry went away when the fireworks ceased and the lanterns burned low. The revelry was over at last, and Lord and Lady Chetwynd, Mr. and Miss Monk, and Mr. Sanders, the bailiff, were alone left in the drawing-room.

Mr. Sanders engaged the marquis in conversation upon some point of special interest to the two. Miss Monk, with a weary air, said good-night and retired to her room. Mr. Monk followed her example. Bernice was longing for a little confidential talk with her husband, intending to tell him of her recent spasm of jealousy, at which she was now ready to smile, but she had not yet opportunity, and reluctantly stole away to her own apartments.

The marquis talked with Mr. Sanders a half-hour or more, and the bailiff then took his leave.

His lordship, who remained seated before the fire, was on the point of arising to rejoin his young wife in her boudoir, when the door opened, and with a soft rustling of garments Sylvia Monk swept toward him. He turned his head, and would have arisen, but she



glided forward with an undulating rush, and sat down on a hassock at his side, and laid one hand half shyly upon his knee, looking up at him with eyes in whose dull blackness was the red glimmer of an evil fire.

"Spare me one moment, Roy," she said, with the soft, caressing manner peculiar to her—"only one moment before you go to *her*. I want to congratulate you upon your marriage, and to tell you how I already love this little Bernice of yours. She is very lovely; and not with the tame loveliness of our English girls. There is something gypsy-like and strange about her—she is so bright, so piquant, so impulsive. How you love her, Roy! Can she appreciate this great love of your noble soul?"

She drooped her head almost to his knee, and her face was hidden from him. Lord Chetwynd replied:

"Bernice is a loyal heart, and she loves me, Sylvia. I know that she loves me."

"How?" demanded Miss Monk, with sudden unrestraint, looking up at him with flaming eyes and white, convulsed features. "How? With the baby love of seventeen—the love of a child for her dolls! What does *she* know of woman's passion, the love that is madness, anguish, despair?"

"My dear Sylvia, what can you know of such love?"

"And you can ask me that, Roy?" cried Miss Monk, wildly. "You who were my betrothed husband—you in whose hand your dying mother placed mine, and asked God's blessing on our union? You can ask me what I know of love—you whose voice thrills me like heaven's own music, whose smile stirs my soul to rapture—you whose love, O Heavens! I flung from me in an idle passion, as if it had been a discarded toy! You did love me, did you not, Roy? You called me sweet names once. I have your letters still, and in

them you call me darling. I had a right to love you, for you were my promised husband. And now—and now—you are married to another. I am the poor dependent, outcast from your love, and—don't speak to me—don't upbraid me, Roy—I have wrecked my own life, and I wish I were dead!"

She dropped her head now upon his knee, and sobbed in a very abandonment of despair.

Lord Chetwynd's fair face turned crimson. He glanced at the door in an agony of embarrassment. A pity almost divine for Sylvia Monk possessed him. He laid his hand on her black locks, and said softly :

"I never dreamed of this Sylvia. I beg you to command yourself. You will regret this scene to-morrow. I cannot bear to hear you sob like this—and for me. Did you not mean it when you gave me back my promise? But you need not answer me. Say nothing that may cause you pain hereafter, my poor, proud Sylvia. And I am so happy while you are miserable! Sylvia, dear sister of Bernice and mine, look up and tell me that you do not mean all your words imply?"

Miss Monk struggled with her agony, and won a superficial calmness, but when she upraised her face the marquis could see that her suffering was real and terrible. She tottered slowly to her feet, fancying that she heard a light step on the stair. She moved away from the marquis, and then came slowly back to him and seized his hand, crying :

"Forgive me. Forget this scene. I shall hate myself for it always. I did not mean to betray myself like this. As a token that you do not despise me, Roy, give me a brother's kiss. And from this hour I will be a true and tender sister to you and our sweet Bernice. Only one brother's kiss, Roy, and as a token that you do not despise me."

The ears of hate are quicker than those of love. Miss Monk heard a gentle rustling at the door. She knew that Bernice had grown impatient, and was come to seek her husband. And knowing this, she drooped her head to Chetwynd's shoulder, and he, pitying her and admiring her for the sentiments last upon her lips, put his arm around her, and bending his face to hers, gave her what she had asked—a brother's kiss.

The door opened softly, and a little dusky head looked in, but was withdrawn upon the instant. Bernice had seen the embrace and kiss. She sped like a little mad creature along the hall, up the stairs and to her own room.

She had scarcely vanished when Miss Monk, knowing and exulting in the work she had accomplished, withdrew herself from Chetwynd's kindly clasp, and glided swiftly away like a serpent, going up to her own room.

Lord Chetwynd, amazed and disturbed, resumed his seat, murmuring :

“Poor girl! Poor girl! I have unconsciously wronged her, perhaps, by my marriage, but I love Bernice, and I cannot regret what I have done. But Sylvia shall always be to me a dear sister. I will forget her secret. I will spare her the humiliation and Bernice the pain which both would feel were I to tell my tender-hearted wife. Poor Sylvia! How nobly she spoke of Bernice, uttering wishes for the happiness that is built on her misery. While I live Sylvia shall be to us as our own blood, as a sister in deed and in truth.”

When he had grown able to dismiss all agitation from his manner, he went up to his wife's boudoir. She was not there, and he sought her in her dressing-room and bed-chamber. She was in bed, her face turned to the

wall. He called to her softly, and she did not answer. Moving gently, not to disturb her, he also retired, and was soon asleep.

Then the little head on the lace-trimmed pillow at his side moved restlessly, and the dusky eyes opened in an expression of wild despair, and Bernice whispered, under her breath :

"It's all true, then. He married me when he loved her all the while. I shall not tell him that I know it. He shall not know that he has broken my heart. I shall not live long, I know ; and when I am gone he can marry his beautiful Sylvia."

The days and weeks passed. Chetwynd Park was usually thronged with visitors, many of them remaining for weeks. The marquis was interesting himself in the erection of some model cottages on his estate, and many cares pressed upon him after his long absence from home. Bernice was bright and gay, the shy, yet self-possessed young hostess winning golden opinions from her guests, and the marquis, tenderly and devotedly as he loved her, did not notice that her gayety was feverish and unequal, that her spirits were capricious, and that she was growing paler and thinner day by day. But though the eyes of love were so blind, the eyes of hate were keen and observing. Sylvia Monk watched her young rival with bitter intensity, knowing well the wound she had received, and hoping that it would prove mortal.

"Perhaps she will die of her grief," thought the scheming woman more than once, as she watched Bernice through half shut, sleepy-looking eyes. "If she only would die of herself, it would solve the whole difficulty and make my way clear, but she will not. I can see that I will be driven to desperate measures."

One day in late November, Lord Chetwynd accident-

ally met Miss Monk out upon the cliffs overhanging the sea. The day was wild and dreary, with a premonition of coming winter. The air was keen, chill and penetrating; the sky of dun gray; the sun hidden behind clouds; the sea ruffled with white caps that sped over the water like frightened gulls. Miss Monk, clothed in heavy russet silk, and wrapped in the clinging folds of an Indian cashmere shawl, shivered, and muttered some fierce anathema against the horrible English winters. His lordship gave little heed to her remark, but, with an air of anxiety, said :

“I do not think Bernice is looking well, Sylvia. Don't you notice how thin and pale she is of late?”

“I have noticed it. It is the natural result of her change of mode of life. She has been used to an absolute freedom at St. Kilda—to rambles on the rocks, and rows upon the sea, whenever the mood was upon her—but here she finds herself hampered with forms and ceremonies—she must dress, must pay visits, must entertain curious strangers—and no doubt she finds the change from freedom to restraint often unbearable.”

“I have thought of all this,” said the marquis. “But Bernice has settled into her new mode of life almost as if resuming old habits and customs. It is a miracle that one so brought up as she has been on a lonely island in the Atlantic can be so graceful, so unconscious of self, so thoroughly well-bred. I am very proud of her, Sylvia. My relatives could scarcely conceal their surprise at her graceful ease and charming manners. **There is an old saying that ‘blood will tell,’** Sylvia, and I am persuaded that Bernice comes of a race of refined and cultured men and women.”

“But she does not come of a long-lived race, I am persuaded, Roy,” said Miss Monk, averting her face. “There is a look about Bernice that makes me think

her doomed to an early death. Have you not noticed how willful and capricious she is of late, how restless and uneasy, how she starts at a footstep, and how pale she grows at the sound of a voice?"

The marquis started, growing pale.

"No, I have not noticed all this, Sylvia," he exclaimed. "Can you be right? Have I been absorbed in my guests, my tenantry, and my improvements, so that I have failed to see these signs of decay so perceptible to you? Perhaps my darling is homesick. Perhaps all these 'forms and ceremonies' are distasteful to her. I thank you for your timely warning, Sylvia, and I will profit by it."

"I wish Gilbert were here," said Sylvia. "He has been up to London now for a month. What is he doing there, do you know, Roy?"

"No, I do not. Dalhoun of Eastbourne told me to-day, when I was at the station, that he saw Gilbert yesterday in town, and that Gilbert was hard at work at the law. I fancy he is studying for the bar, Sylvia."

Miss Monk shook her head incredulously.

"He has got some new idea in his head, I know," she remarked. "His letters are very brief and far between. It is just possible that he may be studying for the bar, but I hardly think it. Work and Gilbert do not agree. You know his favorite idea is to marry a rich wife, and I have the impression that his present movements have some bearing toward that end."

The marquis did not reply. His thoughts were bent upon his wife. His anxieties in regard to her were fully aroused. He consulted with Sylvia in regard to her as they walked to the house. Miss Monk was reassuring, yet she managed to deepen his sense of dread and anxiety, and he declared his intention of sending to town for a physician.

On entering the mansion it was found that a party of visitors had arrived from Eastbourne, and while Lord and Lady Chetwynd went into the drawing-room Miss Monk glided up to her own apartments, which were opposite those of Lady Chetwynd.

On entering her boudoir Miss Monk uttered an exclamation of amazement. The room had an occupant—her brother, Gilbert Monk. He was lazily reclining in a fauteuil, but arose at her entrance with an exaggerated courtesy and an affectation of boyish exuberance.

“You here, Gilbert?” said Miss Monk, flinging her hat and shawl upon the nearest chair. “Why, I supposed you were studying law in London. When did you arrive?”

“While you were on the cliffs. I saw you as you came up to the house. How changed Lady Chetwynd is! What have you been doing to her?”

“Nothing,” said Sylvia, defiantly. “She is jealous, that’s all. She has found out that Roy and I were engaged, and she’s worrying over it. She’s only a child, Gilbert, and she’s grieving herself to death.”

“And you have done nothing to her?”

“Nothing. What have you been doing in London?”

“I have been making researches,” said Gilbert Monk, with an air of reticence. “I have made a startling discovery, which is sure to affect my whole future. If I can do what I am now planning, I shall be a rich man, Sylvia.”

“Does your discovery affect Bernice? It can’t be that you have been searching out and have obtained a clue to her parentage?” cried Miss Monk, excitedly.

Gilbert’s face flushed. He looked uneasy, and exclaimed with singular haste :

“How could I discover any clue to Lady Chetwynd’s parentage? Do you take me for a wizard, or for one of

those detectives of romance who always discover immediately whatever they are told to search out? Nonsense. Lady Chetwynd's parentage is a dead secret, and will remain so. I fancy you have a haggard look, Sylvia. When are you going to end all this suspense and misery?"

"Now—this very night," cried Miss Monk, with sudden vehemence, and with a serpent-like hiss. "I have been driven to action at last by seeing Roy's doting fondness for that girl. He is anxious about her, and fears she will die. It is torture to me to hear him express his anxieties, and to see him hang about her with sickening yearning in his eyes and face. I have borne all that I can bear. I shall remove the obstacle from my path gradually, not to excite suspicion, but the first step shall be taken to-night."

She set her lips together with fierce compression.

Gilbert Monk was not startled, nor did he betray any emotion.

"I suppose you will want to talk the matter over with old Ragee," he observed. "I will leave you to discuss your plans with her, while I pay my respects to my lady. I'll see you at dinner."

He hastened to take his leave. As he closed the door behind him, he heard his sister summon old Ragee. With a strange smile on his boyish visage, he hurried along the hall to the door of his sister's bed-chamber, glanced around him, making sure he was unobserved, and then softly turned the knob. The door was locked.

Nothing daunted by so slight an obstacle he drew from his pocket a slender wire and turned the key in the lock, shooting back the bolt almost noiselessly. Then he opened the door and stole in.

As he expected, old Ragee had joined her mistress in

the boudoir, and the intervening doors were but slightly ajar. He locked the door by which he had entered and crept stealthily into the dressing-room, the sound of his footsteps being muffled by the thick velvet pile on the floor. He crept across the room to one of the windows and hid himself in the thick folds of scarlet velvet laden with golden embroidery.

He had scarcely settled himself in an easy position and had time to mark the closed Indian cabinet of his sister, the open dressing-case, the scent boxes, the fire, and all the appurtenances of luxury, when the subdued sound of the voices of Miss Monk and old Ragee in conversation came in snatches to his eager hearing.

“Good !” he said to himself. “I can hear what they say by close listening. I haven’t spent my month up at London for nothing. I have made a discovery which Lord Chetwynd, the marchioness and Sylvia would give all they have to know. And, as a consequence of that discovery, I have a stake in this business that no one dreams of. I shall make my fortune out of Bernice Chetwynd before I am through with her. But I must be as secret as death, as artful as Satan, as watchful as Argus. What’s that they’re saying? Ah, they are coming in here !”

He shrank back further within the folds of the curtains, holding his breath, as Miss Monk came swiftly, with sinuous rush, into her dressing-room, followed by her Indian nurse.



CHAPTER V.

A NUMBER OF DARK SECRETS.

The hidden presence of Gilbert Monk in the dressing-room of his sister was not suspected by Miss Monk or old Ragee. The Indian nurse bent a quick glance about the spacious chamber, more from habit than suspicion, and then drew a luxurious lounging-chair up to the fire, and her young mistress sank into it wearily, her swarthy face whitened to an ashen pallor, her usually half-shut eyes nearly closed, and her breath coming heavily between her parted lips.

"See that the doors are all locked," said Sylvia Monk, with closed eyes, speaking in a hissing whisper which penetrated even to her brother's ears. "I have something to say to you, Ragee, which must be said in utter secrecy. It would be ruin—death—to us to be overheard."

Old Ragee nodded in silence and examined the various doors opening into the hall from the boudoir, dressing-room and bed-chamber. Having made sure that all were secure she glanced through the rooms, and then returned to her mistress.

"Sit down," said Sylvia Monk, not opening her eyes. "You are sure we are alone—that no one is peeping or listening at the doors?"

"Quite sure," said old Ragee, sinking down into a picturesque heap upon the floor before the fire, and basking in the heat like a cat. "We are alone, missy. You can talk freely."

Still Miss Monk hesitated. The words she meditated were not to be lightly spoken. Ragee betrayed no impatience for her confidence, but waited meekly, well knowing what was to come.

Presently Sylvia gathered courage and spoke again in a low voice and in the Hindostanee tongue. Gilbert Monk understood the language as well as he understood English, and bent forward in uncontrollable eagerness to catch her words.

"Ragee," said her mistress, "I have borne it as long as I can. Every day my soul is torn by the sight of his fondness for her. Every day I am obliged to behold his caresses of her, or hear his tender praises of her, or know that he adores her. I can bear it no longer."

"No, missy," assented the Hindoo, with an imperturbable countenance.

"I have heard," said Miss Monk, "that your brothers are Thugs, and that you in your youth belonged to one of the five orders of that great sect, that you were a *sotha*, or entrapper—that you lured men to their destruction at the hands of the stranglers. I know that you care as little for human life as brute existence. Now I want you to help me."

"Yes, missy. You shall see what Ragee can do."

She gathered herself up from the floor, produced her bunch of keys, and unlocked the Indian cabinet.

Gilbert Monk held the heavy curtain together with his hands, and peered out between the folds, holding his breath, and remaining fixed and motionless as a statue.

The Hindoo woman groped in the interior of the cab-

inet, and touched a hidden spring somewhere at the back. Monk heard a drawer shoot out from its concealment, and Ragee then brought forth a tiny box that glittered in the firelight like a jewel.

Ragee resumed her place upon the hearth-rug, turning the box over in her brown and skinny hands.

It was some four inches square, and made of wrought gold, exquisitely chased in an East Indian pattern, and in each corner of the lid a burning ruby was set like a tiny eye of fire. In the centre of the lid were engraved a few words in the Hindostanee tongue, signifying "The goddess Kali grants their hearts' desire to her worshipers. Revenge is worship!"

Ragee opened her dress and pulled forth from its concealment a long golden chain, to which was attached a tiny golden key. She applied this key to the box and lifted the jewelled lid.

The firelight flooding the hearth-rug, and the faces and figures of the two conspiring women, fell also upon the box, and Monk caught a glimpse of its contents.

They consisted of three tiny vials of clear, colorless liquid like water; of three tiny packets of powder inclosed in thin oil silk; and of three vials of infinitesimal globules which resembled bubbles of air seen upon troubled waters.

These latter vials the Hindoo woman took out and carefully examined. The glass stoppers were tied down with a bit of oiled silk or bladder.

"One of these globules will dissolve instantly in any liquid," said the Hindoo woman, handling the vials tenderly. "They are colorless, you see, and are so small that one alone can hardly be seen. They are swift in their action, and leave no trace. They are distilled from deadly plants that grow in the depths of the shaded jungle. This one is labeled 'heart disease.'

One who takes one of these airy globules in this vial will die suddenly, as by heart disease."

"That will not do," said Miss Monk, shivering, in spite of her evil self-command, at the cold and passionless tone of her Hindoo attendant. "The girl is young and strong ; she is not likely to have heart disease."

Old Ragee put down the vial, and took up another.

"The globules are the best in this case," she observed, "and I need not explain the properties of the powders and liquids. This vial is labeled 'fever.' One taking a single globule of this in liquid is seized with a heavy chill, followed by fever, which runs a course of a week. The ordinary remedies for fever but stimulate the action of this poison, and the patient, after days of delirium, dies. The effect is natural. The most suspicious person in the world could not suspect the use of this poison. It has no smell, no taste, and it leaves no trace. It is a concentrated and deodorized malaria, as one might say. The girl is pale of late, and drooping. What wonder that she should have fever?"

"I like that," said Miss Monk, slowly. "We will use it. Stay. What is in the third vial?"

The Hindoo replaced the second vial before taking out the third. The precaution was necessary, for all the vials were precisely alike, and the labels upon the second and third vials were identical.

"This third vial is also labeled 'fever,'" said old Ragee. "It needs another word to distinguish it from the second vial, for its properties are widely different, although its mode of action is the same. One who has taken it apparently dies of fever after a few days' delirium and sickness ; but he does not die. He falls into a trance, as I might call it, which is the twin sister of death. The body becomes cold and cadaverous, the nose becomes pinched, the eyes sunken. The sem-

blance of death is marvelously real. Life is held in abeyance for three days, and then the mind and body rouse from their long torpor, but for weeks afterward a great weakness is upon the patient, and exertion, thought even is difficult. If it is desired to defer the awakening to six days, it can be easily done. A second globule can be dropped in a tumbler of water, and a teaspoonful of the liquid can be forced between the seemingly dead person's lips. But you will not want this preparation. Take a globule from the second vial."

"But how am I to carry it? How am I to use it?" asked Miss Monk.

"You will have many opportunities, missy. Drop it in Lady Chetwynd's chocolate at lunch, or into her coffee in the drawing-room when you two are alone. Lord Chetwynd has guests to dine, gentlemen from Eastbourne. He will remain with them and Mr. Monk in the dining-room after you ladies leave the table. You can be alone with Lady Chetwynd in the drawing-room when the coffee is brought in. Can you not manage an affair so simple?"

"Yes, yes. But you have not told me how I am to carry the single globule."

"I will get you a very small empty vial which I have in my room," said Ragee. "But first, I will take out the globule. I do not like to leave my box of secrets open."

She produced a slender pen-knife and deftly removed the silk cap of the vial number two, and took from it a single globule, tiny and transparent as an air bubble. She laid this globule upon a small table near at hand, replaced and re-enveloped the stopper, and restored the vial to its place.

"I notice that the cap on number three is loose," she said, taking up the third vial,

“But the drug retains its full strength so long as the little crystals remain unbroken. The silk seems to have rubbed against the partition of the box, and is broken. I must replace it with a fresh cap. I will leave the box in your care, Missy, while I go for the silk and the vial.”

She placed the jewelled box on Miss Monk's knee, and went away through the bed-chamber to her own room, which communicated with that of her mistress by a narrow private passage leading out of a trunk-room beyond the bath-room.

Miss Monk idly examined the terrible and deadly contents of the box.

“What power lies in these simple globes of glass!” she muttered, fingering the vials.

“Ragee is a queen, and these are her soldiers who fight for her and make her path clear. I have heard that she has been suspected of using these things, but no one ever dared accuse her of doing so. Ah! what is that?”

She started, and the vial dropped from her fingers to its cushioned socket, as a knock sounded on the door of her boudoir. She hesitated, with a glance in the direction in which her attendant had gone, but Ragee had barely reached her chamber. The knock was repeated, and Miss Monk recognized it as the knock of young Lady Chetwynd.

“I must go to her, I suppose,” she said half aloud. “What can she want of me? Oh, she has come for that last piece of Claribel's music which I offered her at luncheon. She won't detain me a minute.”

She arose, deposited the box on the table beside the single deadly capsule laid out for her use, flung a newspaper over it, and went into her boudoir, closing the door carefully behind her.

Then Gilbert Monk stirred in his concealment, putting out his head and listening. There was an evil glow on his boyish-looking face, a sinister gleam in his black eyes.

"The devil must be helping me, I think," he whispered. "I see my way clear. My whole course has been marked out by these woman for me. One bold step—I have time, I think—and my fortune is made!"

He crept like a shadow from the folds of the curtains and crossed the floor upon his toes. He reached the table—he paused—listened.

He heard his sister's voice in the boudoir, in conversation with the youthful marchioness whom she was plotting to destroy. He heard no sound of Ragee's return. He lifted the rustling paper, breathing a half-suppressed curse. Again he listened. He took up the "vial number three," to which the torn silken cap still clung. He pulled out the tiny stopper, and rolled two capsules out upon his hand. Then replaced the vial as he had found it, and again he paused to listen.

His heart was beating like a drum. The fortune he was scheming to win was at stake at that moment. A great noise was in his ears. He could not hear Miss Monk speaking to Bernice, yet the air seemed all alive. He caught up the globule from "vial number two," which Sylvia had chosen, and replaced it with one he had taken from "vial number three." Then, with the two globules he had secured, he fled guiltily back to his concealment.

And not too soon. The curtains were yet waving under his touch when Miss Monk returned to her dressing-room and resumed her seat, taking the box again in her hands.

And in another moment old Ragee also appeared, entering as swiftly and noiselessly as a shadow.



THE FATAL GLOBULE DROPPED IN BERNICE'S COFFEE.—See Chapter V.

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"I barely escaped detection," thought Monk, his heart-beats growing calmer. "But who could have foreseen that I would experience such a glorious success? My way is clear!" and an exultant thrill went through his soul.

The Hindoo woman sat down again on the hearth-rug and arranged her vials, without seeing that one had been opened in her absence. This done, she carefully restored the box to its secret hiding-place in the cabinet, and secured the latter. Then she took up the single capsule which Monk had exchanged for the one Sylvia had chosen, and dropped it into a tiny vial, which she had brought from her room for the purpose.

"You can uncork this vial in your pocket, Missy," she said, delivering the deadly agent, "and you will find chances to use it without being seen."

"I shall use it before the day is over," said Miss Monk in her soft, hissing voice. "In a fortnight or less, Lady Chetwynd will repose in the family tomb in Chetwynd church. And now I am tired. I will lie down for an hour before I begin to dress for dinner, Ragee, and you must sit by me as usual while I sleep. I am afraid to be alone."

The two adjourned to the bed-chamber, leaving the door of communication ajar.

Gilbert Monk remained a long time in his concealment not daring to attempt his escape. He emptied his small silver match-safe, and dropped into it the two capsules he had stolen, and put it in his pocket. He sat down on the window-ledge and looked down into the park. The fear of discovery was strong upon him, and he listened intently to every sound.

At last the regular breathing of Miss Monk announced that she slept. The silence of old Ragee seemed to indicate that she was also nodding. With sudden and

desperate boldness Gilbert Monk stole from the protection of the heavy curtain and crept across the dressing-room and into the boudoir. He had not been heard. He hurried softly to the door, unlocked it, and slipped into the hall.

There was no one to be seen. Lady Chetwynd's doors were shut. Monk waited only long enough to turn the key of the boudoir door in the lock with the wire he had before used, and then crept stealthily to his own room.

And then, and not till then, did he breathe freely.

He flung himself on a couch in a glow of evil triumph, muttering :

"I'll keep the capsules for my own possible wants. Their possession is a power on which I can call in case of need. Sylvia will administer that globule to Bernice to-day. But Bernice will die only in seeming. They shall all believe her dead, even Chetwynd, and I alone shall know the secret that she lives. Ah! my month in London was well spent. The discovery I made there will prove my fortune, if I go on as well as I have begun. But I have work to do. I'll borrow money of Chetwynd after dinner, and go back to London to-night. I have a heavy task before me in the next week. Ah! what would Sylvia say if she could know the trick I have played her in exchanging the globules? It is plot and counter-plot, only that my plans will not interfere with hers. She shall win Chetwynd, if she can—while I win fortune!"

Miss Monk appeared in the drawing-room half-an-hour before dinner, as cool and self-possessed as if no thought of evil had ever entered her mind—as if even then she were not meditating the basest act of treachery, the deadliest crime known to humanity. She was dressed with unusual care in a robe which was a marvel of beauty. Its color was that of a pale tinted

lemon, and contrasted well with her swarthy complexion, her cheeks and lips of glowing carnation, the dun blackness of her hair, and the deep, dull gloom of her sleepy Indian eyes. An overskirt of black lace gave effect and expression to her attire. She wore her favorite jewels of yellow topaz, and a necklace composed of a dozen graduated strings of them lay like a gleaming collar on her bare brown neck, and strings of them clasped her dusky, massive arms.

The dull November day had closed long since, and the lights were glowing softly in the tinted globes of the gasalier, flooding the room with a mellow radiance. The fires in the grates all burned brightly, with lambent flames, and their red lances of light fell upon the carpet, the furniture and the walls. The curtains of satin and lace were dropped, their folds sweeping the floor.

Miss Monk sent a sweeping glance around her as she approached the fire. The grand long room seemed untenanted, but her keen gaze espied in the deep recess of a distant window-seat the gleam of wine-hued and silken drapery, which she knew belonged to Bernice. She turned from her course and approached the window-seat with a swift, undulating grace, and drawing aside the curtains, looked down upon the little figure that crouched on the wide window-ledge.

Bernice looked up at her with a half-tortured, half-defiant expression upon a face full of infinite woe and gathering despair. There was a stormy look in the wide brilliant eyes, and the broad, low brow, under masses of blue-black hair, was contracted as in deep mental pain.

"Not moping, Bernice?" said Miss Monk, with a caressing gayety. "There is a world of sadness in your eyes and face. Are you fretting for the good foster-parents of St. Kilda, for the grim island rocks, the rude fishers and fowlers, the wild life, the freedom from cares and

ceremonies? You look as if you were longing to go back to your old home."

"Oh, I wish I had never left it!" cried Bernice, with a passionate outbreak of her despair. "It was my home, and I had a right there. But here I feel like a usurper, and I cannot conquer the feeling. Do I not know how people regard me? They smile upon me, they pay court to me because I am Marchioness of Chetwynd, but what do they really think of me? Why, I heard Roy's aunt, who was here last week, upbraid him for his *mésalliance*, and tell him that I was the first of humble blood who ever married a Chetwynd. He was haughty in his answer, it is true, but he likes his aunt, and her words are likely to rankle. And his cousin asked him who I really am, and he could not tell her. Think what it must be for a proud English nobleman not to be able to tell from what sort of people his wife sprung? And the other day, as I entered the conservatory, I heard Captain Allyn ask Miss Graham of Eastbourne if Lord Chetwynd had not 'been mad when he married his not pretty beggar-maid?' The truth is, Sylvia, the county people and all Roy's relatives consider that I have committed an unpardonable presumption in marrying a marquis."

"Bernice," said Miss Monk, in a low voice, "you think you have all to bear. Let me undeceive you. There are other sad hearts under this roof than yours. Roy himself has troubles to which yours are the merest trifles. No, I do not mean that Roy has sorrows; if he has it is not for me to speak of them. What should he have to trouble him? But my life, Bernice, is dark and drear. A year ago I was the happiest of women. I was betrothed to one I loved, and he loved me with the first love of his life, that grand, overmastering passion which never, never dies. It's a sad story, Bernice. I

only tell it you that you may see how small your griefs are beside mine. He loved me—he loves me yet ! Such love as his cannot die ! But I was proud and willful, and we quarrelled. He was goaded to recklessness—he went away—he— But I have said enough. In his pride and anger and mad recklessness he placed a barrier between him and me that neither he nor I can pass. But I know he loves me yet. He will never be my husband in this life, Bernice, and in the Beyond there is no marriage. By one rash act, bitterly regretted by him and me, he has divided us to all eternity. Have I not much to bear, Bernice ? Can your childish griefs compare with mine ! My story is new to you, you have never suspected it, I know. I should never have told it to you but to teach you that one may live on in patience when one's heart is broken."

Bernice pressed her small face against the cold window-pane, but her slight figure was motionless. Miss Monk knew, however, that false and artfully-told story had done its work.

"Do you suppose he loves you still?" asked Bernice, presently, in a hoarse, strained voice.

"Yes," said Miss Monk, hesitatingly. "I do not mind confessing to you, Bernice, since you do not know my lover, nor can ever know him, that he loves me still with more than the old love. He—has told me so of late—this very day—"

She paused and covered her face with her hand.

Bernice still looking from the window, uttered a choking sob. Her life had been so hermit-like at St. Kilda that she had known nothing of baseness, treachery or the worst forms of wickedness. She would as soon have suspected Miss Monk of murder as of lying, and thus she received her false assertions as solemn truth.

She believed that Lord Chetwynd must have spoken words of regret and remorse that day to Miss Monk.

"It has all been a cruel mistake, Sylvia," she said, brokenly, her passionate young voice quivering. "I am not the child you think me. I seem suddenly to have had my womanhood forced upon me. You are a woman, and so would pity me if you knew, if you could guess— Oh, Sylvia, I am so sorry for you, for Roy, for us all. But it's too late now."

"Bear up, as I do, Bernice. Hark! Some one is coming. What will Roy say to see you like this? You must keep up appearances, even though your heart break, Bernice. That is the lesson I have had to learn. Force a smile, dear, and put on the mien of a happy and beloved wife, or our guests will say that Roy is not good to you."

Miss Monk forced a laugh and Bernice echoed it hollowly. Footsteps were heard in the hall, and when Lord Chetwynd entered, in company with a young life-guardsmen, one of his guests, the youthful Lady Chetwynd emerged from the window recess, and came forward to greet the young officer with a pale, proud face, and gentle, courteous manner, without a vestige of her recent agitation and her smouldering despair.

The remaining guests, including Gilbert Monk, presently sauntered in, and soon after dinner was announced.

Bernice bore her part at the banquet with more than usual silence, but with graceful ease and self-possession. Miss Monk noticed that the young hostess ate nothing, making only the faintest pretense of trifling with her food. She noticed, also, that under the gentle courtesy of Bernice there was a suppressed excitement, a tumult of feeling, which tasked the girl's entire powers of self-control.

The ladies retired from the dinner-table after the dessert, leaving the gentlemen over their wine.

Bernice would have returned to her window-seat and a sort of half solitude in the shadow of the curtains, but Miss Monk gently forced her to a seat by the hearth, saying :

"You ate no dinner, Bernice. How long can you keep up without food? You will surely create a scene before the evening is over if you do not brace up your nerves. And think of Roy's horror and mortification if you should create a scene! You must take at least a cup of coffee before the gentlemen come."

Without awaiting a response she touched the bell and gave her order to the footman.

Presently he re-appeared, bearing a silver tray on which was a tiny *tete-à-tete* coffee service, consisting of a miniature coffee-pot, cream-jug, sugar-bowl, etc., in exquisitely chased silver. There were dainty cups of Sevres china painted with flowers, and small gold spoons of rare workmanship. He deposited the tray upon a table and withdrew.

Miss Monk glided to the table, one hand in her pocket, her fingers pulling nervously at the cork of the vial therein. Extracting the cork readily, it being but loosely put in, she dropped the poisonous globule into her hand. Then her dark hands fluttered over the cups and dropped the transparent capsule unseen and unsuspected into one of the tiny cups.

Bernice was bending over the fire, her face averted. Miss Monk smiled with complacent satisfaction, and daintily filled the poisoned cup with sugar, cream and coffee, and brought it to Bernice with a Judas smile and tenderness.

"The coffee is strong, dear," she said. "Drink. It will do you good. No, you shall not refuse it," she

added, playfully, yet with hidden anxiety. "Strong coffee is a tonic for the nerves, Bernice. You must drink it."

The young marchioness yielded, and drank to the dregs the poisoned cup that was held to her lips.

Miss Monk waited in dead silence until the empty cup was given back to her. Then she went to the table and silently poured for herself a portion of coffee and drank it eagerly. Then she walked to the window, her pulses throbbing, her brain almost reeling, her soul in a tumult of wicked triumph.

"It is done!" she said to herself, with a backward glance over her shoulder. "She has taken the drug. She is surely doomed. She will complain of illness within an hour. She will die within the week."

CHAPTER VI.

THE PUPPETS OF MR. MONK.

While Sylvia Monk was so successfully carrying on her diabolical plot against the youthful marchioness, the Marquis of Chetwynd and his guests had passed through that charmed half-hour after dinner so loved by English gentlemen, when, "across the walnuts and the wine," anecdotes and reminiscences are exchanged, and many a brilliant thought finds utterance, and many a scrap of philosophy or flash of wit is cooked. Lord Chetwynd was secretly anxious about his young wife, and he was not sorry at last to give the signal for the return to the drawing-room.

His lordship brought up the rear as he returned with

his guests to the presence of the ladies. Gilbert Monk fell behind also, and whispered to Chetwynd hurriedly :

“Can you grant me a moment’s interview in the library, my lord? Only a moment’s. I promise that your absence shall hardly be noticed—it will be so brief.”

Gilbert wanted to borrow some money which he obtained, and said, as he bestowed it in his pocket-book :

“I have barely time to reach Eastbourne to catch my train. Make my adieus to Lady Chetwynd and your guests, my lord, if you please. I shall probably return, like a bad penny, within a week, and shall be glad then to receive your counsels in regard to my future, and shall be able to give you my views upon the law as a profession for me. Good-night, my lord. Ten thousand thanks for your generous kindness.”

The two men shook hands and separated. Lord Chetwynd going to the drawing-room, and Gilbert Monk hurrying up stairs to his own room. He hastily changed his dinner dress for his ordinary street costume, threw on his great-coat, and dashed down stairs again and out into the carriage porch.

His carriage was in waiting. He entered it, and was driven rapidly away from the house and down the broad shaded avenue. As he passed out at the lodge gates he put his head out of the carriage window and looked back at the great house, which glowed like a gigantic lantern, and his swarthy face gleamed with a sinister light, and he muttered :

“I am the only person in the whole world who knows who Bernice Lady Chetwynd is. And I mean to make my knowledge secure my fortune. Sylvia pursues her games regardless of me ; Chetwynd is wrapped up in his young wife ; each has his or her own schemes or projects, while I am like the showman who, concealed

behind the curtain, pulls the strings attached to his puppets, making them perform to his satisfaction. And so, unconsciously to themselves, the inmates of Chetwynd Park are my puppets, and move at my bidding. They shall all work for me unconsciously, and I will reap the reward of their labors."

He laughed softly, and leaned back upon his cushions.

Lord Chetwynd, meanwhile, had entered the drawing-room. His brief absence from his guests had scarcely been noticed. Miss Monk, her swarthy cheeks aflame, her dull black eyes gleaming with a red sparkle, her face all animation, her tall figure all undulating grace, stood under one of the gasaliers, the centre of an appreciative and admiring group. His lordship glanced about the room in quest of his young wife.

Bernice was in a further corner of the long apartment, and was also standing. She was in conversation with a tall, blonde young gentleman, and exhibited a feverish gayety. She was plain at best, but to-night her brown, gypsy face was startlingly pale, her lips colorless, and her entire appearance contrasted painfully with that of Miss Monk. But Bernice's brown eyes shone like stars, with a strange, fitful lustre and brilliance that almost atoned for her lack of beauty. She suddenly shivered, turned from her group of admirers and went to the fire, sinking into a chair at the corner of the hearth and shivering violently.

"How cold it is!" she murmured, half crouching before the bright blaze. "Ah, that was like a breath from the North Pole, keen and frosty! I seem to wither before it like some summer flower before the breath of winter."

"Bernice," exclaimed the marquis, in alarm, "are you ill? You look and speak so strangely—"

Bernice raised her eyes to his, and there was a piteous look in her blazing orbs. Her pallor was become unearthly.

"Oh, Roy!" she cried, "I am so cold! There is a chill upon me like that of death!"

Her voice rang through the rooms like a tolling bell.

In a panic of terror the young marquis gathered up her slight, shrunken figure in his arms, and bore her out of the room, up the stairs, and to her own chamber. With a furious pull at the bell he summoned Fifine, and bade her undress her mistress. He despatched a servant, well-mounted, to Eastbourne for the Chetwynd family physician, and another to Chetwynd-by-sea for the humbler practitioner there. He summoned Mrs. Skewer to his young wife's side, and the panic of his great dread spread throughout the household.

The humble practitioner of Chetwynd-by-sea soon arrived, and was shown up into Lady Chetwynd's presence. He was a conscientious person, not at all learned, but he was conversant with the treatment of ordinary and simple diseases.

Doctor Bennet approached the bedside, bent over the young marchioness, felt her pulse and looked grave.

"I should advise sending to Eastbourne for Doctor Hartright, my lord," he said, drawing the marquis aside.

"I have sent for him," said the marquis, briefly.

Dr. Hartright appeared at last, and pronounced the case one of fever. He was a large, portly man, of benevolent aspect, a skillful physician, a scholar, and a gentleman. The marquis looked at him appealingly for his verdict.

"You need not look so despairing, my lord," said Dr. Hartright, as the two walked away from the bedside.

“Lady Chetwynd is young, endowed with a splendid constitution, and I venture to predict that she will soon be well again.”

Despite this prediction, despite the constant attendance of her physicians, the devoted care of her nurses, Lady Chetwynd grew steadily worse. The fever seems to have seized upon her with a hold that would not be shaken off. Miss Monk shared Lord Chetwynd's vigils during the night, and Dr. Hartright and Mrs. Skewer also remained in the sick-room. By morning, the young marchioness was raving in delirium. She did not know her husband; she shrieked in terror when Miss Monk bent over her, and raved wildly of St. Kilda, its rocks, its waves, its grandeur, and its freedom.

By midday, Lord Chetwynd, nearly beside himself, sent his butler to Eastbourne with a telegraphic message to a famous London physician. The great London doctor arrived at Chetwynd Park that evening, held a consultation with Dr. Hartright, suggested a course of treatment, and went back to town upon the following morning, without having been able to better the condition of the sick girl, or even to probe the cause of her illness. The fact that there was fever in the village of Chetwynd-by-sea seemed to be proof sufficient to the trio of doctors that this fever of Lady Chetwynd's was of the same character.

A week passed—the week required by the subtle Indian poison to do its work—and Sylvia Monk knew that the end was near.

The day was dark and chilling, one of those cheerless December days which are found nowhere so cheerless as in England. A low fire burned in the grate. The curtains were drawn back, and the windows were lowered at the top. Bernice Chetwynd lay upon her bed

in a deep sleep—a sleep so profound that it seemed like death.

Miss Monk sat at the bed foot, her face hidden by the lace bed drapery. She was motionless as a statue. Her evil work was almost done, she believed, but she felt no exultation. The awe and dread of death that was one of her peculiarities made her afraid to look upon her victim. It required all her self-command to prevent her rushing from the room. She was a coward, and her soul trembled.

Lord Chetwynd stood by the bedside, his fair face haggard, his blue eyes weary with watching. He was still hoping, and just now he was watching the face of the great London physician and Dr. Hartright, who were bending over the patient. The first-mentioned doctor held Bernice's slender wrist in his hand.

"How sweetly she sleeps!" whispered the marquis, turning his hungry, eager gaze from the doctors to his young wife and back again. "This deep sleep will restore her strength. Is not the fever leaving her?"

"Yes," said the London doctor, "the fever is leaving her."

A great glow of joy lighted up the face of the marquis.

"Will she awaken in her right mind?" he asked.

The London doctor answered him in the affirmative, still keeping his finger upon the lessening pulse and his eyes upon the thin pinched face of Bernice.

"Thank God!" cried Lord Chetwynd, fervently, the glow on his face deepening. "Thank God that my darling is to be spared to me."

The face of the London doctor grew pitying. He said, not looking at the marquis:

"I have not said that she will live, my lord. It is not I who hold in my hands the issues of life and death.

I cannot give Lady Chetwynd the boon of life. That must come from a hand that is mightier than mine."

"But you said that she will live."

"Ah, no, I did not say that. My lord, her life is ebbing even now. She will waken presently, know you, speak to you perhaps, but it will be a flaming up of the dying torch. My lord, it is as well to know the truth. Lady Chetwynd is dying now, at this moment."

Lord Chetwynd uttered a cry of horror that rang through the room.

Miss Monk shuddered, and emitted a low moan.

The statue-like figure upon the bed stirred feebly. The heavy brown lids lifted slowly from the hollow eyes. The poor, pinched young face awakened to a semblance of life again. The cry of Chetwynd had aroused Bernice from her slumbers, and her eyes sought him with feeble glances.

"Roy!" she whispered, faintly. "Roy!"

Lord Chetwynd choked down his sobs and bent over her, his face white as her own, an awful anguish in his blue eyes.

"Oh, Bernice!" he said, in a choked voice. "Bernice—little wife! My God! how can I bear it?"

He fell on his knees beside the bed, and buried his face in the coverlet, his frame shaking with suppressed sobs.

A blank look, as of an utter failure to comprehend his emotion, passed over the sick girl's face. She looked from Chetwynd's bowed head to the faces of the doctors. They were regarding her with pitying eyes. She turned her glances upon Mrs. Skewer and Ffine, but both were crying with stifled sobs. With a puzzled expression she raised her thin hand between her and the light. The hand fell again helplessly upon the bed.

"I—I understand—I have been ill," said Bernice, in a fluttering voice. "I had a chill, I remember. How weak I am ! And yet I have no pain—only a sense of delicious languor. Roy, why are you crying ? I am almost well again !"

The great London doctor laid his hand upon her forehead, upon which a moisture was gathering.

"My dear Lady Chetwynd," he said, solemnly, "you are 'almost well again.'"

Something in his tones gave her the alarm. She started, looked again at him, and a low panting cry broke from her pallid lips.

"You—you speak as if I were dying?" she gasped. "I am not dying. Oh ! Doctor, I am so young, and I love Roy so, and he loves me ! I know he loves me. I cannot die. You do not mean it—you cannot. Why, I am only seventeen, and full of life and strength. Oh, no, you do not mean that I am dying."

She looked at the physicians entreatingly, her soul in her wild eyes. Dr. Hartright's lips quivered, and he turned away. The London doctor's pitying look deepened, but his duty was plain, and he could not shirk it.

"My dear child," he said, with a tender solemnity that brought conviction to the girl's rebellious heart, "you are dying even now. It would be cruel to keep the truth from you. If you have any last words to say, say them now."

There was an awful hush in the room. Lord Chetwynd stilled his sobs. Bernice drew the sheet above her face and was silent. What passed in her young soul in that awful moment, they could only guess. Life was so sweet to her, and she was so young—how could she die ? They fancied they heard her lips move in prayer. They watched her in an agony of suspense and dread.

Presently she uncovered her face. It was calm now,

and upon it was set the seal of an ineffable peace. The hollow eyes shone with a lustre that might be a reflection of the glory of heaven.

"It is well," she whispered. "I am not afraid to die. I have not left my preparations for death until this hour. Oh, Roy, don't cry. It is better so. I am willing to die. But it is so strange that I should die. Why, a week ago I was health itself. Only yesterday I rowed on the bay—was it yesterday? It seems a hundred years ago. Oh, Doctor, are you sure that I am dying? Perfectly sure?"

The London doctor bowed assent.

"Where is Sylvia?" asked Bernice, her eyes roving.

The motionless figure at the foot of the bed stirred now, and Miss Monk came slowly forward, her frame shrinking in a horror and loathing of death, her face hidden by her handkerchief.

"I want to see Roy and Sylvia alone," whispered Bernice. "Please go out, all of you, and leave me with them."

The doctors, Ffine, and Mrs. Skewer, all went out, as she had bidden. Bernice was alone with the husband who worshiped her, and the subtle and terrible enemy who had brought her to this pass!

For a few moments a deathly silence again reigned in the sick room. Bernice's thin weak hand fluttered to the bowed head of her young husband, and rested there like a benediction. Her eyes wandered to Miss Monk, who had sunk into a chair by the bedside, and whose face was still covered. At last the feeble voice spoke.

"Roy, I am not afraid to die," she said, softly, her face suffused with a yearning tenderness, which even death could not change. "It is better so. Be brave and calm, darling, for my sake. Look up. Let me

meet the gaze of your dear eyes once more. Let me take the memory of your loving glance into eternity with me."

Lord Chetwynd forced himself to be calm, and obeyed her wish. He continued to kneel beside her bed, outwardly calm, but inwardly convulsed with an awful agitation.

"Roy," said Bernice, feebly, "I feel myself growing weaker. What I have to say must be said quickly. I have been very happy. I love you, darling. You have called me your guardian angel, and I shall be your guardian angel in truth now. I was not fit to be a marchioness. I am not stately nor beautiful—only a wild little island girl. Your wife should have been well-born. Hush, Roy; you pain me. Your friends have never been reconciled to our marriage. The county families have blamed you for your *mésalliance*. But death condones everything. They will all be sorry for me now—I am so young to die!" and the girl's voice grew piteous in its sorrow.

"Oh, my wife! my wife!"

"My poor boy!" said Bernice, gently. "You will be lonely when I am gone. I have been here but a little while, but you will miss me from these grand rooms, miss my voice in the halls, my step on the stair, my presence everywhere. I know it all, Roy. But you are young, only three and twenty. In time, I shall become to you only a tender memory. You will think of me at twilight, on the water, or when you hear sweet music, but you will think that I am happy, and you will not wish me back. You will know that your darling is safe."

She paused, breathless, but strangely calm. Miss Monk shivered.

"Roy," said his young wife, more gently, more softly, her sweet, faint voice fluttering like a dying bird, "in

heaven there is no jealousy. And so—and so—bear with me, Roy; I know the words will pain you now, but some time they will come back to you as a blessing—in the days when I shall have become a tender memory, you will take another wife to your bosom—”

“Never—never!” cried Chetwynd, in passionate despair.

“You think so now, darling, but you are the last of a great line, and you have no one to succeed you. You are young, and you will need some one to cheer you. You will live to be old, Roy, and you must not live all your years alone. And so I want to say, dear, that I—I should like you to marry again. I know of your betrothal to Sylvia. I love her, Roy, and I would like her to take my place. She loves you and will make you happy. When I shall have been dead a year—how strangely it sounds!—I want you to marry Sylvia. She will talk with you of me, and will comfort you in your sorrow, and will take my place, Roy, by and by. I shall not be jealous. Promise me, Roy.”

“I cannot!”

Bernice took his hand in one of hers. She reached out and took Sylvia’s hand also. The guilty woman would have drawn back, but those cold, slender fingers closed upon hers, and drew her hand to that of Chetwynd, and placed it in his and clasped them both.

“I give you both my blessing,” fluttered the failing voice. “Sylvia, be good and true to him. Roy, my husband, my love, my— Tell father and mother—St. Kilda—”

The sweet voice stopped. The hand that clasped those of Chetwynd and Sylvia Monk grew suddenly cold and stiff. The marquis started up. An indescribable change had come over the little brown face, the eyes were fixed and glassy, the mouth still parted with a

smile frozen on it. Chetwynd uttered a wild cry and sprang to the door, summoning the doctors.

They were just outside, and hastened in. The great London doctor felt the girl's pulse and gently closed the staring eyes.

"She is dead!" he said solemnly.

Miss Monk uttered a shrill shriek and went into hysterics. Mrs. Skewer and Fifine bore her to her own rooms, leaving her to the pangs of her guilty conscience, the ministrations of old Ragee, and the benefit of her soothing draught.

We need not dwell upon the despair of the young husband. He shut himself up in his room, and refused admittance to any one. Mr. Sanders, the bailiff, took charge of the house, and of the necessary arrangements for the interment.

The next day Gilbert Monk, who had been summoned by telegraph by his sister, arrived at the Park.

He seemed shocked at the sudden death of the young marchioness. The house was overhung with a pall of gloom. The servants moved about noiselessly in list slippers. Doors were opened and shut softly; voices spoke in whispers. He asked for Lord Chetwynd, but was told that the marquis saw no one, not even the rector of his church. He wandered in and out of the lower rooms, and at last went up to his sister's apartments and knocked upon the door of the boudoir.

Old Ragee gave him admittance. He pushed past her into the room.

Miss Monk was seated at her writing table, making out an order to her London dressmaker for mourning. Her face was haggard and worn. Her dull eyes were like black ashes. She had not the look of a repentant woman, nor had she the look of a guilty one. Monk could not guess at the state of her mind.

"Ah, Gilbert!" said Sylvia, in her smooth voice. "I expected you earlier. Bernice died very suddenly. I suppose you were fearfully shocked."

"Well, no," said Monk, coolly, taking a seat near his sister. "I expected it, you know."

Miss Monk's face paled.

"When is Lady Chetwynd to be buried!" Monk asked.

"She is to lie in state a week. So Sanders has arranged. Roy hasn't given any directions yet, and no one dare speak to him. He is locked up in his room. It is impossible to send for Bernice's friends at St. Kilda. They are shut in for the winter. It is now December, as you know, and no boat can be found to go to the island, nor, if one could, could the Gwellan's be got here in time for the funeral."

The announcement that Bernice was to remain unburied for a week was what Gilbert Monk had expected. The drug whose subtle power held Bernice in her death-like trance would lose its effect in three days, and he must contrive to give her another dose before the first should exhaust itself.

He took his leave, and wandered out of doors into the park. The time passed heavily to him, but his secret schemes kept him at the Park.

The next day was passed, and the next. The third day was come.

Upon this day Bernice would awaken to life and strength unless a second dose of poison could be administered to her. But how was it to be done?

About noon he went to the closed door of the drawing-room and knocked for admittance. He knew that Bernice was lying in state here, and it was time he was at work. Mrs. Skewer came to the door, opening it only a few inches.

"It is only I," said Monk. "I have not seen Lady Chetwynd since her death. May I see her now?"

"Certainly, sir," said the housekeeper. "Come in, sir."

She gave him admittance. The windows of the drawing-room were darkened. The walls and windows were hung alike with funereal black. There were no fires. A chill desolation reigned.

Monk advanced to the bier, and Miss Skewer laid off the linen that covered the face. Monk drew back with a shudder. Surely Bernice was dead! One in a trance could not look like this!

A horrible misgiving came to him. A great horror came upon him. It was many minutes before he could speak. Mrs. Skewer respected his emotion, misinterpreting it, and busied herself with the flowers at the marble throat.

"We keep these flowers continually fresh," she said. "These are wilting. I will get the fresh ones from the conservatory while you are here, sir."

She stole out silently, leaving Monk alone.

He glanced around him hurriedly. There was a glass of water near which had been brought in by Mrs. Skewer for her own refreshment. He seized it. He had ready the larger of the two globules he had secured, and he dropped it into a glass. It dissolved on the instant. He drew from his pocket a teaspoon and bent over the girl. There was no time for hesitation. He filled the spoon, carried it to the parted lips, and slowly emptied it. The poisoned draught found its way down the girl's throat.

He wiped her stony lips with his handkerchief. He put his spoon in his pocket, and emptied the glass upon the thick carpet in a distant corner. He replaced the tumbler on the table, and returned to the bier.

How still and cold she was ! How gray was her thin face—how pinched the nostrils !

“ I have heard of trances,” thought Monk ; “ they are common enough ; so I can understand how she would linger a week without nourishment. But this semblance of death is horrible. I fear she is really dead !”

At this juncture Mrs. Skewer returned with her flowers, and he departed, drawing a long breath of relief when he found himself in the hall.

The week passed. The day appointed for the funeral—the sixth day after the supposed death—arrived. The great mansion was thronged with guests. Lord Chetwynd’s relatives had all arrived. The county families were all represented. The young marquis, dressed in deepest mourning, showed himself outside his room for the first time since his bereavement.

He had grown deathly white and thin. His blue eyes burned with despairing fires. His mouth was set in an expression of awful sternness. No one dared to speak to him words of condolence.

The form of Bernice was coffined, and her friends gathered to look for the last time on her sweet young face. The coffin lid was screwed down, and that face was hidden from their sight. The black crape-covered coffin was carried out to the waiting hearse, and the funeral cortege took its way to the parish church of Chetwynd-by-sea.

There was a funeral sermon, and with tender eulogy, with tears and heart-breaking, they consigned Bernice to her tomb. They carried her down to the family vault of the Chetwynds under the parish church, and deposited her coffin upon a stone ledge, close beside the coffin of Lord Chetwynd’s mother, the late Lady Barbara Monk. And here, one by one, they went away and left her. The bereaved young husband lingered

far beyond the others, but the good rector with gentle authority drew him away at last, and the sexton locked the massive iron door with his massive key, and went away also. And Bernice Chetwynd, living or dead—ah! which was it?—lay confined and alone in the darkness and amid the decay of that dread charnel-house; and in all the wide world but one soul suspected that the spark of life still smouldered within her clay-cold form.

If aught should happen to Gilbert Monk to prevent his intended visit to her that night, and if, indeed, she were not dead, but living, what would be her fate?

CHAPTER VII.

A SECRET EXPEDITION.

The parish church of Chetwynd-by-sea was a Gothic structure of gray stone, and stood at one end of the long straggling village street. Upon one side of it was the gray stone Gothic rectory, half-hidden in mantling ivy-vines. In the rear of the church, upon an inferior street, a sort of green lane, stood the sexton's dwelling, in the middle of Mechanic's Row, a block of two-storied dingy brick houses of humble pretensions. The keys of the church were kept the one by the rector, the other by the sexton.

There were two keys to the family vault of the Chetwynds. One of them was kept locked in the church safe, with the church register and records and the silver communion service. The key of the safe was in the possession of the rector. The other key of the

vault was in the keeping of the Chetwynd family, and was deposited in the tall walled-in safe in the library of Chetwynd Park, in company with valuable family papers, heirlooms, jewels, and silver plate.

In order to carry out his plans, it was necessary that Gilbert Monk should possess himself of one of the keys of the Chetwynd burial vault, and also find means to enter the church. The task appeared difficult ; but he was not a man to be dismayed by obstacles.

He returned home from the funeral in advance of Lord Chetwynd, went to his room, packed his portmanteau, and ordered a carriage to take him to Eastbourne in time to catch the early evening up train. Then he went to his sister's room.

Miss Monk sat before her fire. There was a red gleam in her half-shut eyes that spoke of jubilant triumph. She was looking into an ivory-framed hand-mirror, and studying the effect of her new jet ear-rings shaped as crosses.

"Busy worshiping at the usual shrine, eh, Sylvia?" said Gilbert Monk, lightly, closing the door behind him, and satisfying himself with a glance that old Ragee was not present. "I'm off for town again. Chetwynd Park is intolerable to me in its present gloom. I shall be back and forth, of course, but my address for the present will be at Scotsby and Newman's, Chancery lane. What are you going to do with yourself, my dear?"

Miss Monk laid down her hand-glass upon her knee, and answered with cool deliberation :

"I have done with action, Gilbert. It is not necessary for me to do anything."

"Do you intend to remain at Chetwynd Park?"

"Most assuredly," said Miss Monk, coolly. "My foot is here, as I may say, upon my native heath. I am no longer the poor dependent, but prospective mistress of

all these grandeurs. Mrs. Skewer went to Lord Chetwynd's room this morning for directions in regard to something or other. He waved her off, saying: 'Go to Miss Monk.' I am virtually mistress here. Of course I shall stay."

"You're a lucky woman," said Monk, drawing a chair near hers and seating himself. "I dare say, if you besiege the fortress properly, that you may become the second Lady Chetwynd."

"There is no possible doubt on the subject," replied Miss Monk, positively. "He was bound to me. His mother urged him to marry me. He considered me for a long time as his future wife. He knows that I love him. And, to crown all, Bernice, when dying, told him that she did not want him to mourn always for her—that she hoped he would marry me in a year. She clasped my hand in his, and so died."

"Incredible!"

"I should have said so, if you had told me the story," said Miss Monk, "but Bernice never was like any one else. The knowledge that her husband had been my betrothed lover was gall and wormwood to her. In her exalted moods she was quite capable of committing suicide in order to leave him free."

"I wish you all success, if I may be allowed to reiterate my good wishes," said Monk, coolly; "and now I must be off. I congratulate you upon your success, and I promise you that I will do nothing to mar it."

Sylvia Monk started and looked at her brother uneasily.

"What success?" she demanded, looking out at him from under her heavy, drooping eyelids in a quick, furtive way. "And how could you mar it if you wished? You talk in riddles, Gilbert."

"Yes? Let me tell you plainly, then," and he put his

mouth close to her ear and hissed : " I know how Lady Chetwynd died ! I know it all ! "

Miss Monk shrank away from him, her face growing livid, a wild look in her opening eyes. She tried to speak, but no sound came from her trembling lips. But there was an expression of terror on her face, of agonized questioning, of deadly fear, that were sufficient confession of her guilt.

Monk laughed softly, enjoying her abject fear.

The hand-mirror slid from Sylvia's knees to the floor, and she laid back her head on the cushions of her chair gasping for breath.

" Did you feel so secure then ? " asked Monk. " You need not take my discovery so to heart. You are free to wear what you have won, or can win. Only when I want money I shall expect you to supply me. That is the point of all my remarks. I have got a hold upon you whether you acknowledge it or not, and you must be my banker till I realize from a venture I am now making, and which will bring me in a fortune. I shall want large sums of money, possibly, and you must get them for me. I say *must* ! You manage other things so cleverly—such as removing a rival, for instance—that it will be but a mere trifle for you to secure me such sums of money as I may want from time to time. Good-bye."

He touched her hand lightly and went out of the room airily, leaving her alone.

She looked after him fearingly.

" How much does he know ? " she whispered. " There was a vast amount of hidden meaning in his manner. But he can only suspect. But I shall not dare refuse him money when he asks for it. I am, to a certain extent, in his power."

On leaving Miss Monk's room, Gilbert walked down

the long hall toward the grand staircase. As he paused for a moment on the landing, a woman, with her handkerchief at her eyes, entered the hall at its lower end from a long corridor beyond. Monk paused to look at the woman as she approached. Her little ribboned white cap sat jauntily on her head, her smart and coquettish attire and trim figure, all proclaimed her to be Fifine, Lady Chetwynd's chattering French maid.

Monk waited for her to come up.

"What's the matter?" he asked, abruptly.

"Nothing, monsieur," answered Fifine, wiping her tears, "only Mr. Sanders, the bailiff, is returned from the funeral, and he called me into the housekeeper's room just now and said that my lord is in such a frame of mind that I had best not be seen by his lordship. What misery! What despair! His lordship cannot look upon my face, lest I remind him of my poor young mistress. Ah, monsieur, she was an angel! It is the good who die early. But Mr. Sanders has generously promised to pay me a year's wages, and I'm to leave to-morrow."

"You go to Paris?"

"No, monsieur—to London. My father has a pastry-cook's shop in Soho. He has achieved a grand reputation for his French rolls, his meringues, his cakes. I shall take another situation as soon as I can find one with a lady of quality, and in the meantime I will stop with the good papa in the pastry-cook's shop in Soho."

Monk slipped a silver coin in her hand and went on down the stairs.

The lower hall was deserted, and he passed unobserved into the Moorish library, locking the door behind him.

He lighted a taper and went to the massive safe,

which had been built into the wall, and was hidden by ordinary double doors of wood. He had, on a former visit, before his recent trip to town, taken wax impressions of the various locks, and now produced keys, one of which unlocked the wooden doors covering the front of the safe.

He then unlocked the heavy iron doors without difficulty, and explored the interior of the safe with nervous rapidity. Fortune favored him. In one of the drawers he found several bunches of keys, one of them belonging to the "strong room," and several odd keys, one of which, a great, massive, rusty key that might have belonged to a door of the Tower, was seized upon eagerly as the one he wanted.

He thrust it into his pocket, relocked the safe as he had found it, blew out the light of his taper, and restored the latter to the taper-stand on a writing-table whence he had taken it, and noiselessly unlocked the door leading into the hall. He listened a moment. There was no movement in the hall outside, and he opened the door and passed out of the still, darkened library, his pulses beating like tiny drums.

He took down his greatcoat from the hall-rack, and noticed, as he drew on the over-garment, that the hall-porter was fast asleep in his great high-backed Elizabethan chair. He went down the steps into the carriage porch. Mr. Sanders was there, awaiting anxiously the return of Lord Chetwynd. The carriage Monk had ordered was also there, and the driver was half asleep on his box.

Monk waited to shake hands with the bailiff.

"You ought to wait for the express, sir," Sanders said, glancing at his watch. "The first train is only a parliamentary."

"True," said Monk; "but I was obliged to go on it. I

am reading law now, Sanders, and our firm directed me to stop off at Lewes upon a little business with a client who is to be at the station to meet me. Business leaves one little time to indulge in private griefs, Mr. Sanders. I will run down again to the Park soon, and I hope then to find Chetwynd in a more healthy frame of mind. Ah! a house of mourning is a sad place!"

He stepped down into the vehicle, entered it, and was driven down the avenue and out at the lodge gates on his way to Eastbourne.

The day was fast darkening. The gloom of December was upon the thick woods bordering the road, upon the gray sky and the gray, heaving sea. A gloom began also to settle upon the spirits of Gilbert Monk. He began to be beset with fears in regard to Bernice Chetwynd in her coffin. The power of the drug she had unconsciously taken must be nearly spent. She must be near her awakening. What if Lord Chetwynd were still in the vault with her? What if she should revive? What if his lordship were to rescue her from the clutch of her enemies?

The very thought brought a cold sweat to Monk's forehead. His impatience became almost insupportable.

Gilbert Monk was very silent during the remainder of the drive to Eastbourne, but his fingers were incessantly busy with the big rusty key which he believed was to open to him an immense fortune.

Arrived at the town, Monk found the train on the point of departure. He thrust a coin in the coachman's hand, secured a ticket to London, and ran across the platform. The guard opened the door of an empty first-class compartment, Monk sprang in, the door was shut and locked upon him, and the train started.

At the first station at which the train stopped Monk

arose, unlocked the door of the coach with a key which he always carried for the purpose, and let himself out upon the side of the train furthest from the station. Then, with his portmanteau in his hand, he walked away in the darkness along a rural lane, not having been observed by any one. He moved briskly; as toward a certain gaol. The train went on presently at its slow and labored rate of progress, and as it disappeared in a distant cutting, Gilbert Monk came out upon a cross-road bordered with hedges.

Here, drawn up at one side of the lonely country road, was a closed carriage, to which were attached two horses. A driver sat upon his box smoking a black pipe, and keeping a vigilant look-out upon all sides, as it seemed.

"Is that you, Flack?" asked Monk.

The driver uttered an assent, and sprang down to the ground. He opened the door of the carriage, seized Monk's portmanteau and put it under the seat, and waited for Monk to enter the vehicle.

"Have you got everything all right?" asked Monk. "Where's your dark lantern?"

Flack produced, from under one of the seats in the carriage, a lantern. He turned back the slide, and a red stream of light filled the vehicle. The front seat was seen to be heaped with shawls, cloaks, and other articles of apparel. There was also a small hamper of wines and biscuits, with a bottle of brandy, all ready for instant use.

"That is well," declared Monk. "I believe we have everything necessary."

He turned back the lantern so that the light fell upon the face of the coachman.

It was a hang-dog face, of a low and brutal type: one of those faces that are oftenest seen at the criminal

dock. He had recently committed some crime for which he was likely to be severely punished. Scotby and Newman, despite their location in Chancery lane, were criminal lawyers, and had been applied to by Flack as his counsel in his present trouble. It was thus that Gilbert Monk had heard of him.

Monk had studied the man and his history, and learned various facts which would place Flack in his power. Monk obtained a private interview with Flack, assuming the air of a master. The fellow was coarse, brutal, unprincipled, and utterly base, but he cringed to Monk like a very coward. The latter gave bail for the appearance of the fellow at court when wanted, and made a compact with him, by virtue of which Flack was to serve him faithfully, and to receive therefor a certain sum of money and protection from the avenging law for all his past crimes.

Flack turned back the slide that covered the lantern, and hid the latter under the seat. Monk stepped into the carriage, saying, in a low voice :

“Drive slowly. We will arrive at Chetwynd about midnight. Save the horses for the drive out. Be cautious. And now be off.”

It was near midnight and pitchy dark, when Gilbert Monk's closed carriage came out upon a point of the hilly road overlooking the village of Chetwynd. Monk stopped the carriage here and alighted. The village below was dark and silent, only a few lights gleaming through the darkness. Out at sea one or two lights flickered with the waves.

“It is just the night for our work,” said Monk. “We could not have had a better. You are to remain here with the carriage. The sound of wheels on those paved streets at this hour would arouse every soul in the village. The girl does not live half a mile from here.

She'll be ready, though, despite the gloom. Girls are always ready for an elopement. I'll go down there alone. You are to wait here till I return, if I don't come till morning."

"Yes, sir," said Flack. "You'll find me here, if you don't come till Lady-day."

"Give me the lantern; I shall want it. The long black cloak also, with the hood; and don't forget the basket with the brandy and the tools. Her father may have locked her up, and I shall then have to release her. There are a pair of lady's boots in the basket, with other necessaries. That will do."

Monk took the cloak and basket on his arm, and burdened himself with such other things as he deemed needful. Then, with a parting admonition to Flack not to sleep, and to be on the watch for his return, he strode away down the hill toward the sea, disappearing from the view of his ally in the darkness. Flack, as is seen, supposed his new master to be engaged in an elopement with a young lady.

The half mile of intervening distance was soon traversed. As he approached the old gray church he heard the clock of Chetwynd Park strike the hour of midnight.

He stole up to the churchyard gate, softly opened it, and crept into the porch and crouched there, listening.

There was no one in the street. He turned on a tiny section of the light from his lantern, and found the lock on the church-door. He had taken a wax impression of the keyhole a week before, and was now provided with a key, with which he unlocked the door, and passed into the building, locking the door behind him.

His lantern was hidden under his coat. He dared not turn on the light, lest some stray gleam should be seen by some casual eye and bring detection upon him. He crept along the aisle. Under the reading-desk was

GILBERT MONK CARRYING BERNICE FROM THE CHURCH.—See Chapter VII.



a door, kept always locked, which opened upon the stairway leading to the vault. Monk had provided himself with a key to fit this door also, and he hastened to apply it.

On opening the door, he turned on the full light of his lantern, and crept down the wide stone stair. He peered about him with restless, incessant glances, and paused again in the arched stone passage below. A door opened off the wide passage into the Chetwynd family vault, into which the key he had stolen from the safe in the library at Chetwynd Park gave him admittance.

Monk advanced into the gloomy crypt to the bench upon which the coffin of Bernice Chetwynd had been deposited, and held up his lantern, letting the light fall in a ruddy flood. The coffin, strangely long for a girl like Bernice, was soon found. Monk knew it by the crisp freshness of the black crape covering it, and by the gleam of the burnished silver handles. To make sure, he examined the shining silver plate, and read upon it the legend:

BERNICE,

Wife of Roy, Ninth Marquis of Chetwynd.

AGED 17 YEARS.

He set down his lantern upon the coffin, and taking out tools from the basket he had brought, he set to work to unscrew the coffin lid. His hands trembled so that he could scarcely work. His heart seemed to swell

within him to suffocation. He paused every instant to listen. When the lid had been unscrewed and carefully laid aside, there was such a blur upon his eyes that he could not see the girl's face though the glass covering it.

"How weak I am!" he muttered. "My fingers are strangely clumsy too. I am all nerves to-night."

He took a drink of the brandy he had brought for Bernice. It steadied his nerves, and he raised the glass and looked full upon the uncovered face of Lady Chetwynd.

It had not changed since he had last seen it. The long black eyelashes lay upon the gray cold cheeks, so strangely sunken. The pinched nostrils, the sunken eyes, the parted lips slightly protruding, all bore the semblance of death in such marked degree that Monk believed that she was dead.

He laid his hand on her forehead. It felt to his touch like marble, and chilled him through and through.

"Old Ragee must have been deceived about those poisons," he said to himself, in sudden despair and rage. "Possibly I made a mistake in the globule I gave her. She's dead, sure enough. My fortune will be what I can get out of Sylvia; nothing more. And for this I have spent my money and worked and schemed—for this!"

He muttered a curse and grated his teeth.

An idea suddenly came to him. He started, drew a pocket mirror from his coat and held it above the girl's parted lips.

When he withdrew it there was a slight moisture upon it.

Now, indeed, he went to work with a will. He pulled off his coat and unscrewed the entire top of the coffin, which was removed, and the form of Bernice Chetwynd,

in her bride-like robes of white silk, lay stretched out before him.

He spread the cloak he had brought upon an empty bench, and lifted the stiff, rigid figure in his arms and laid her upon it. Then he returned to the empty coffin.

"I'll get a wax figure made to put in here," he thought. "But just now I want something for weight, that's all."

He looked hastily about him. In a distant corner was a heap of stones. He seized upon them and packed them into the coffin, placing them so that they would not rattle should the case inclosing them be jarred. Then, with frequent glances at the silent figure on the stone bench, he put on the top of the coffin and carefully screwed it into its place. A few minutes' work restored the burial-case to its former appearance.

And now, with a long breath of relief, he again approached the motionless, death-like figure on the bench. Its continued immobility frightened him. He persuaded himself that he had deceived himself in regard to the moisture on the glass. He tried the experiment again, with the same result.

"She is alive!" he cried aloud, exultantly. "Perhaps nature is too weak to rally unassisted. I must do something for her."

Her chafed her cold hands with feverish energy. He poured brandy between her lips. He called to her softly to awaken.

And slowly—oh, how slowly!—the rigid figure began to relax. The stiffened limbs fell into more natural position. The cold, waxen hands fell slowly apart. And into the deathly face a look of life began to steal. The pinched look about the nostrils, the bluish tint about the sweet lips, the bluish eyelids, the gray, hol-

low cheeks, all began to change, as under the touch of an invisible hand. The complexion became less like the ghastliness of death, and more like the pallor of sickness. Surely life was stealing back to the citadel whence it had been routed. Surely the blood was beginning to move sluggishly in those frozen veins !

Monk, in an agony of impatience, gave her more brandy. He doubted the evidence of his senses. He could not believe in the slow and subtle change going on before his eyes. He was half persuaded still that she was dead.

But at last the spell upon her was broken. The blood began to flow more quickly in her veins. He felt her heart throbbing under his hand, and soon he felt the feeble pulse in her wrist. Her trance was ended. The thin, transparent eyelids trembled and flickered, and then lifted, and Bernice's brilliant eyes, like stars of dusk, opened, and looked around her in a wondering stare.

Monk moved backward a step, overcome with emotion. She was alive ! Alive—and every one but him believed her dead ! His fortune was made !

The wondering stare of the big brown eyes took in the stone arching above her, and the sweet voice of Bernice called, in fluttering, frightened tones, so feeble they could scarcely be heard :

“ Roy ! Roy ! ”

Monk could not answer her. His face was glowing like a demon's. His eyes were ablaze. His sinister joy swelled within him, rendering him speechless.

“ Oh, Roy ! ” said the fluttering voice, faintly. “ I've had such an awful dream ! And I'm so tired, darling. Take me in your arms, Roy ; I am so cold.”

Monk controlled himself now by the exercise of his reviving will. He drew from his pocket a vial of

brandy, in which an innocent narcotic had been mixed, and stepped forward, placing it to the girl's lips. She put it from her feebly in surprise.

"You here, Gilbert?" she whispered. "Am I not in my own room? No! Where am I? Where is Roy?"

"Roy is at Chetwynd Park," said Monk, calmly, "abed and asleep, perhaps. And you are here."

"Here?"

The girl feebly lifted herself to one elbow and stared around her wildly. The sepulchral character of the place was apparent to her at a glance. The coffins in the niches along the walls and on the stone benches, the arches, the flooring—all stone—impressed her with sudden terror. She glanced at her own bride-like garments in increasing wonder and amaze.

"Where am I?" she asked. "I had a chill, I remember—and, oh, yes, I was very ill, and they told me that I was dying. I spoke to Roy and Sylvia—and then—Where am I? Where am I?" and her wild young voice rang shrilly and sharply through the crypt.

"All that happened a week ago," said Monk. "You were supposed to have died. This place is the Chetwynd burial vault under the parish church in Chetwynd-by-sea. You were consigned to this tomb to-day by your friends, with all the pomp and ceremony due a Marchioness of Chetwynd. Roy is at the Park, attended by the old rector and by my sister Sylvia. I had a suspicion that you were in a trance, and came to see. Your husband believes you dead. Everybody believes you dead. Your obituary has been published in all the papers. Had it not been for me you must have died in yonder coffin from which I took you. You were buried alive!"

Upon the girl's face a slow horror had gathered. It seemed frozen there now. The wild eyes, the parted

mouth, the white face, expressed a horror beyond words. She started up as if galvanized—her arms outstretched, her aspect startling, vivid, awful! She tottered toward him. She tried to speak, but no words came, but instead pealed forth from her parted lips a shriek that rang through the dim vault and the old church, awakening a hundred echoes. 'Then she fell at Monk's feet white and motionless.

"Fool that I am!" cried Gilbert Monk. "I have been too abrupt. I have killed her."

CHAPTER VIII.

MONK'S CARE OF BERNICE.

The fear that he had killed Bernice by his abrupt revelations for a moment paralyzed Gilbert Monk. It was an awful moment. It seemed as if invisible hands had snatched his prey from him in the very hour of his triumph. He glared about him with menacing glances, as if daring invisible enemies to combat. He stared down upon the senseless figure at his feet with a horrible fascination.

A rush of damp, chill wind, strong with the odors of the charnel-house, passed over Bernice, fluttering her silken draperies. Monk fancied that she had stirred. In an instant he was himself again, cool, self-reliant, energetic. He stooped and gathered the girl in his arms and carried her again to the stone bench, laying her upon the unfolded cloak, and chafing her hands with violent energy.

"It's only a swoon, I'm sure," he thought. "She

must be very weak. Old Ragee said the poison in 'vial number three' left the person who might take it as helpless as an infant. She has only fainted. Bernice—Bernice !”

Bernice soon recovered, and sat upright on the stone bench, one hand upon her forehead in the attitude of one trying to remember, her dusky eyes exploring the recess of the vault with glances of horror and loathing.

“Do you feel better now, Bernice?” Gilbert asked, modulating his tones to tenderest sympathy, and hiding the sudden exultant joy that swelled his soul.

“Better?” and Bernice's sweet, young voice thrilled him with its strangeness, and the girl's haunting eyes fixed their wild, troubled glances upon him. “Oh, Gilbert ! is this place the Chetwynd burial vault ? Is all you have just told me true ? Are these my grave-clothes ?” and she looked in loathing at her dress. “Have I been buried here—left to moulder in one of those hideous coffins—left to the worms, to darkness, to decay, to this horrible loneliness—under ground among all these dead people ?”

“Yes, Bernice.”

“Oh, God ! they buried me while I was alive ! and if you had not come to me, Gilbert, I should have awakened in one of those loathsome coffins—should have struggled and prayed and fought in vain ! Oh, Gilbert !”—and she shuddered—“how can I ever repay you for the happy chance that brought you to me ? I cannot understand why you came here.”

“It was a strange providence, Bernice. I had seen a man once who lay in a trance. He came to life at his own funeral. You looked as he looked when I saw him in his coffin, and I had a sudden fancy—I call it instinct—that although you had seemed to be dead during six days, the spark of life might yet be smouldering in your

bosom. I spoke to Doctor Hartright regarding my suspicions; but he rebuked me sternly, and said that you were actually dead, and that my suspicions were the wildest folly. They consigned you to your tomb this afternoon. To-night I could not sleep. I was haunted by the idea that if you had really been in a trance, you might be dying in your coffin the most horrible of deaths by slow suffocation; and so I stole out and came here. You can guess the rest. Providence has made me your savior. I have brought you back to life."

"And may God bless you, Gilbert Monk! I shall love you as long as I live for this night's work," cried Bernice, with passionate fervor. "I will be your sister. You shall have a home at Chetwynd Park so long as you live. Roy shall settle a handsome annuity upon you. I shall never, never forget that you have saved my life, have rescued me from the tomb, have stolen me out of my coffin away from decay and the vile worms. Oh, Gilbert! what a fate is this from which you have rescued me!"

"Terrible—horrible indeed!"

The girl's eyes roved about among the coffins with curious shrinking.

"From which of those coffins did you take me?" she whispered, shuddering.

"From the one upon which the lantern stands. I have replaced the top. Will you look at it?"

Bernice hesitated, then nodded assent.

Monk went to her, and supporting her gently, led her to the coffin whence he had taken her. The red light fell upon the engraved plate upon the top. Bernice read the inscription in a shrill, frightened whisper, while she rested heavily upon Monk's arm.

"And I was in that narrow box," she said, falteringly.

"They had put me out of their sight forever under that coffin lid, down in this cold, dark place ; and I was alive all the time ! Think, Gilbert. But for you I should be inside that black box at this very instant, moaning, crying, tearing my hair, praying wildly for help that could not come and dying a thousand deaths in one, while Roy is crying for me at Chetwynd Park, and praying God to help him bear his sorrow. I seem to hear his voice calling on my name. Roy ! Roy ! Take me to him, Gilbert—take me to my poor, broken-hearted darling !"

She clung to Monk in anguished pleading.

"Yes, Bernice," answered Gilbert Monk, gently. "Can you walk, do you think ?"

The girl tottered a few steps, and then reeled, and would have fallen, but he caught her.

"You are too weak to walk, Bernice," said the schemer. "Let me give you a little more brandy. That will give you strength enough to reach the street at least, and I can carry you home."

He had hastily thrust his small bottle of drugged brandy in his pocket after Bernice had refused it, and he now produced it again, uncorked it, and placed it to her lips.

She drank eagerly, more than he had expected.

"Now come," she said. "I feel stronger, Gilbert. Think of Roy in our great lonely rooms. What will he say when I come back to him from the grave ? You must go in and break the news to him gently while I stand outside, Gilbert. Imagine his amazement—his bewilderment—his joy ! Oh, come, come ! I am wild to get to him !"

She tottered toward the stair like a spectre. Monk took up his lantern, holding it aloft that he might see no trace remained of his midnight visit to the vault,

and then he took up the cloak and basket he had brought, followed the girl out, locked the vault, and stole up the stair. At the top she paused, weak and gasping, for breath.

"Let me put this cloak on you, Bernice. So," he said.

He wrapped the long black cloak about her and pulled the close hood over her head, half hiding her white face. Her dress trailed below the cloak. He pinned it up for her as deftly as a woman. Then he opened the door and stole out with the girl, who sat down on the porch step while he locked up the church and put the key in his pocket.

He had left everything as he had found it, with not a trace of his presence in the church upon that night. He felt exultant, triumphant, joyful.

"Come, Bernice," he said, softly. "We must hurry."

The girl did not answer. Her head had fallen forward on her breast, and she was breathing heavily. The narcotic in the brandy she had drank had taken effect. She was asleep.

"It's all right now," muttered Monk. "When she awakens she'll be far enough from here."

He stooped over, gathered her up in his arms, and crept down the porch steps, moving among the tombstones toward the gate. As he passed out into the deserted street, he heard the stable clock of Chetwynd Park tolling solemnly the hour of two.

He climbed the hilly street, and approached his carriage. He heard the horses pawing restlessly as he came near.

"Flack !" he called, in a low voice.

"Yes, sir," was the prompt answer. "This way, sir."

Monk came up to the vehicle. The driver leaped down from his box, pipe in mouth, and opened the

coach door. Monk sat down his basket, turned back the slide of his lantern, flashing the light into the vehicle, and laid his helpless burden in upon the cushions.

"Is she asleep, sir?" asked Flack, in amazement. "Or is she in a swoon?"

"She fainted away down below the hill," said Monk, calmly. "The walk was almost too much for her."

Flack winked significantly with his left eye.

"Look here, Gov'nor," he remarked, "this 'ere's the rummiest elopement I ever heerd on. You've been gone up'ards of two hours, and come back carrying a girl as is helpless. It has a queer look. Why don't you tell the truth at once and shame your poor old father? which I won't mention his name. I am in your power, and I shouldn't dare blow on you. Lor! an abduction an't nothing to what I've done. It's an innocent child's play. I like a man that's bold and keen as you are, and up to a game or two of his own. You may as well take me into your confidence, Gov'nor; I'll serve you faithful."

Monk turned the light on the man's face. He saw that the fellow was sincere. He knew that he could trust him. Flack was in his power, and was anxious to conciliate him in every possible way. He knew also that a spice of wickedness and peril in the present affair would only render it more interesting to his ally.

"Well, I will confide in you, Flack," he said, with an appearance of frankness. "You dare not play me false, you know. If you were to attempt it, you'd get yourself into a tighter box than you've been in yet. I like a fellow of your daring, and I mean to keep you in my service. But about the girl. You have suspected the truth. It's not an elopement business, but an abduction."

"I thought so."

"She's a poor girl," continued Monk, "and hasn't a penny in her own right, although her father is a well-to-do squire in the neighborhood. I love her and she scorns me. I mean to make her marry me. There's the whole story—all you need know at present, at any rate. Now mount your box. The morning will soon be here. You have been over all these roads during the last week, and can surely find your way even in this darkness. If you cannot, I can."

Monk wrapped up the insensible girl carefully, closed the carriage door, and climbed up to the box. Flack was up beside him on the instant, and he turned the vehicle, cracked his whip, and they went rapidly along the road in the direction whence they had come at an earlier hour of the same night.

"Turn here, Flack," said Monk, abruptly. "Our course now lies along lonely and unfrequented roads. We are sure to meet no one. There are no houses near the road for miles. You can drive as fast as the horses will go."

Flack obeyed the injunction literally. He urged the horses to their best speed, and neither of the two men spoke for hours. Monk was busy with his schemes, and his ally was content to be under orders.

At last the gray of early dawn began to creep up the sky. The horses began to flag.

They were now in the midst of a bare and lonely common, having left the strip of beech wood behind them. The fences were broken down upon either side of the road, and Flack turned off from the highway, and drove over the common, a mile or more, and came at last to a lonely shepherd's hut, unused at this season by the shepherds. Not a chimney was in sight upon any side.

Behind the snugly built hut was a rude shed. Flack drove into this shed with his carriage, leaped from the box, and proceeded to unharness the horses. They lay down in the coarse straw where they had halted.

Monk alighted and opened the carriage door. Bernice was in the midst of her artificial slumbers. Monk lifted her out, spoke a few words of direction to his ally, and started for the hut. It had but one door and one window. Monk knocked upon the door thrice significantly, his knock being a signal. There was a rattling of bolts inside, and then the door opened, and a woman's head was protruded.

"It is I," said Monk. "Let me in."

The door opened, and Monk bore his burden into the hut. The door clanged shut, and was secured again upon the instant.

The interior of the hut into which Gilbert Monk had thus taken the insensible Bernice was humble enough. It was only a summer home for the shepherds who tended their flocks on the common. There was a capacious chimney, a yawning fireplace, and a roaring wood fire, over which a tea-kettle was hanging. A thick steam came hissing and roaring from the kettle. In a further corner of the room was a heap of clean straw, covered with a white new blanket.

Monk laid Bernice down upon the simple bed, turning her face to the wall that it might not be seen. Then he walked to the fire, warming his hands over the blaze, as he said :

"It's a cold morning, Mrs. Crowl. I am glad to see such lively preparations for breakfast. Did you arrive last night?"

"Yes, sir," replied the woman, in a deep, masculine voice. "I walked five miles after dusk to this hut from Darnley. I staid here alone all night. The young

woman is asleep, I see, sir. Did you have any trouble with her?"

"None at all. She is drugged. If she wakens, as she will by and by, she must be fed and well dosed with the doctored brandy. She must be kept under the influence of the drug until we arrive at our journey's end. She is as weak as a little child, and she will not be well for months—possibly not for a year. She will need the closest care and attention during all that period."

He drew one of the wooden stools up to the corner of the hearth and seated himself.

The woman took a shelf from the wall and laid it across two stools, and proceeded to use it as a table, placing upon it a few dishes, which she produced from a basket close at hand.

This woman, Mrs. Crawl, was of singular appearance. She, like Flack, was a client of Scotsby and Newman's, and her past career had been such as to justify Monk in placing implicit confidence in her.

She was not of the same class as Flack. She possessed a fair education, and had a natural dignity of manner that would have become a lady. She was dressed quietly in black silk. Her collar and cuffs of linen were spotless. Her drab hair was neatly and fashionably arranged. She would have been taken for a lady anywhere.

She was a large, tall woman, of powerful frame and massive proportions. Her complexion was fair, somewhat freckled. Her eyes were of steel blue. She was not handsome, nor was she repulsive. She gave one the impression of power, both physical and mental.

Her father had been a respectable tradesman. At the age of sixteen she had made a runaway marriage with a man named Crawl. Her father had disowned her for her rash disobedience, he having forbidden the

match. Her father had died a few years later, leaving his property to a charitable institution. Crowl, who had from the first ill-treated his wife, now deliberately deserted her when she was ill, leaving her to starve. This fate she had barely escaped through the charity of her poor neighbors. She had never seen her husband since ; had been sewing woman, nursery governess, and lady's maid by turns ; had been arrested for a theft of money at her last place, and had only escaped conviction through the energy of her counsel, Messrs. Scotsby and Newman. That she had been guilty of the theft there was no doubt. She had been betrayed into it through her besetting sin—avarice.

This was the woman whom Gilbert Monk had chosen as his chief confederate in the evil course upon which he had entered, and he could not have chosen more wisely for his purposes. Yet even she was not permitted to share his entire confidence. Gilbert Monk was too astute to place implicit trust in any human being but himself. While he remained master of his own secrets he knew well that they were safe.

Mrs. Crowl produced a coffee-pot, and proceeded to make coffee, more for herself than for another. By the time it was made, a triple knock was heard on the door, and Flack's voice was heard demanding admittance. Mrs. Crowl let him in. He brought a large hamper from the carriage, and the woman unpacked it and spread a portion of its contents on the bench.

Monk and his two confederates ate heartily, and Flack then went out to feed and water his horses. He was gone half an hour or more. When he returned Monk was dozing before the fire, the remnants of the repast had been put away, and Mrs. Crowl had unshuttered the window, and was looking out through the

dingy panes of glass upon the wide and desolate common. Flack bestowed only a glance upon her, crept to a corner, and went to sleep on the bare floor.

That day proved unusually cold for the season. The wind blew strong and fierce, penetrating into the cabin through a hundred seams and crevices. Mrs. Crowl kept up a fierce fire, not suffering it to flag. The cabin shook and trembled in every gust. There was snow in the air, and a few flakes were tossed hither and thither like thistle down. There was no danger that any one would be upon the downs that day, and Mrs. Crowl rejoiced in the fact.

A little after noon Gilbert Monk awoke with a start, and almost immediately thereafter Bernice stirred upon her bed of straw in the far corner, and murmured a name.

Monk crossed the floor to her side and bent over her. Her eyes opened ; she recognized him.

"Oh, Gilbert," she said, faintly, her eyes moving restlessly, "I have had such a hideous dream ! Was it a dream, about the vault, the cof—"

"Hush, Bernice," said Monk, gently. "It was no dream. It was all true. But you are safe now, and no further harm can come to you."

"This is not the vault," said Bernice, looking up at the smoke-blackened roof, "nor the church. We were in the church, Gilbert. We were on the porch, and then I sat down to rest. Where are we ? Is this some cottage on the way to the Park ?"

"Yes," said Monk, without compunction of conscience for his falsehoods. "I have brought you a part of the way, and becoming tired under your weight, have stopped here to rest. These good people have given us shelter and a fire."

"You look tired out, miss," said Mrs. Crowl, darkening

the window and approaching the youthful marchioness. "You were fast asleep when the gentleman brought you to my door in his arms. Won't you have a bite or sup before you go on?"

"What time is it?" asked Bernice.

"It's past midnight, miss," said Mrs. Crowl, glibly. "My man is asleep, as you see yonder. You will soon be going on with the gentleman; won't you have a cup of coffee first?"

The fragrance of steaming hot coffee saluted the girl's nostrils. A faint hunger awoke within her. She arose from the rude bed, pushed back her hood from the wan and ghostly face, and tottered forward to a seat upon one of the stools. She was deathly weak; she felt dizzy and ill; she could scarcely command her thoughts or her bodily powers.

"I feel very strangely," she said, faintly. "I am very weak, madam. I will have some coffee, if you please."

Mrs. Crowl hastened to prepare a cup of coffee, putting in secretly a strong dose of narcotic poison, as her employer had directed her to do. She brought this and a plate of daintily sliced cold fowl and sweet biscuits to Bernice, who trifled with the food and drank the coffee to the dregs.

"You'll feel better presently, Miss," said Mrs. Crowl, removing the dishes. "The coffee was unusually strong and will steady your nerves."

"Yes, it does already," said Bernice, feverishly, looking at Monk with glittering eyes. "Don't you feel rested, Gilbert? Oh, I am so anxious to get home. I can walk now, if you will allow me. Oh, do let us go!"

"I am very tired, Bernice. You know I carried you in my arms all the way here. We have but this mo-

ment arrived, and I am not yet rested. This good woman has had just time to boil that coffee. I will have a cup, if you please, madam. I am quite chilled and tired."

Mrs. Crowl filled a fresh cup with coffee, and brought it, with food, to Monk. Bernice noticed the hamper with a faint surprise. One would hardly expect to find a closely packed hamper of delicacies and wines in a cottage or hut of this description. Yet no suspicion of anything wrong came to her. Her only thought was to be on her way to the Park—her only anxiety was to get to her husband, who believed her dead, and who mourned for her, refusing to be comforted.

In her impatience she arose to show Monk how strong she was. She sank down again upon the wooden stool, utterly strengthless.

"I can't walk, Gilbert," she said, piteously. "I am so strangely weak. The fever must have taken all my strength. Oh, Gilbert, are you not almost rested? You shall rest when you get to the Park. Dear Gilbert, I want to get home—to Roy—to my own rooms—my own bed. I will make myself as light as possible, only take me home."

She fairly sobbed in her pitiful pleading, and reaching out her thin, claw-like fingers, she clung to him in agonized beseeching.

"Directly, Bernice," said Monk, drinking his coffee. "I am almost ready. I am getting rested."

Bernice sighed heavily, and fixed her piteous gaze upon Monk. He was uneasy under it, and finished his meal mechanically, pondering what excuses he should make to her to account for his further stay at the hut. He at last devised a manner of excuse, and was about to utter it, when he noticed that the girl's head had

drooped, and that her eyes were closing again in slumber.

He waited a few moments in silence until her breathing testified to her slumbers, and then he said :

"She is disposed of, Mrs. Crowl. That narcotic will stand our friend throughout the journey. She will sleep now till to-morrow morning."

He arose and carried Bernice back to the bed on which she had slept all the morning. Then he went out to feed and care for the horses. He was absent an hour, and when he returned, brought with him the chill air of the outer world. There were flakes of snow on his coat, hair and beard. He had his valise in his hand.

Flack was still asleep. Disregarding the presence of Mrs. Crowl, who retired to the window, Monk opened his valise and took out his dressing-case, which was well filled with bottles of colored liquids and dyes. He selected a bottle and camel's hair pencils, and with the skill of an artist began to paint dark circles under his eyes, and lines along his nose and on his cheeks, and wrinkles across his forehead. He did not shave his full beard, nor dye it, yet the change in him was so great that even Sylvia Monk would have been puzzled to recognize him at the first glance. He looked thirty years older than he had ten minutes before.

When he had finished he called to Mrs. Crowl. The woman was full of astonishment at the transformation he had effected and was loud in her praises of his skill.

Flack awakened presently and was served with food. Monk announced that the horses were in fine condition, and ordered the carriage to be in readiness at dusk. The command was obeyed.

The night proved chilly, but not too tempestuous for traveling. They regained the public road without diffi-

culty, resumed their course to the eastward, and traveled all that night. Monk had his course marked out upon a small pocket map. He consulted it soon after daybreak.

"We must be near the hamlet of Pollock," he said.

"There is a very good inn there, kept by a dotting octogenarian and his bustling wife. We shall stop there to-day. You have both received full instructions, and I shall expect you to adhere to them literally. Flack, you had better put on your big, false red beard. It will half cover your face and disguise you completely."

Flack put his hand under the driver's seat and found his valise. He opened it and produced the beard alluded to, put it on, and was satisfied with the disguise it afforded.

About nine o'clock of the dark morning, the jaded horses and travel-stained vehicle entered the narrow, grass-grown street of the little hamlet of Pollock, which was a score of miles away from any railway station. Flack drove boldly to the little inn, and into the court-yard.

The mistress of the hotel, with hostler, stable boy, and bar-maid, appeared upon the stone flagging, all full of curiosity in regard to the strangers, and eager to assist them to alight.

Gilbert Monk slowly alighted from the box, in his character of elderly gentleman, and raised his hat to the portly inn mistress, saying :

"You are the proprietress of the inn, I take it, madam. My name is Brown. Mr. Brown, of Brown Hall, Devon. The lady within is Mrs. Brown, my sister-in-law, a widow. The young lady is my daughter who is nearly dead of consumption. She has been to the east coast for her health, but has failed rapidly, and

we are taking her home by easy stages to Devon. We desire your best rooms until to-morrow morning, when we must resume our sad journey. My daughter is quite helpless, and when awake is delirious. We are taking her home to die."

The inn mistress was shocked, and full of commiseration. Monk lifted out Bernice's light figure. The girl's face had been covered with a veil by Mrs. Crawl. The inn mistress preceded her guests up to the public parlor, and rooms were immediately put in readiness for the use of the new-comers. A comfortable parlor with two bedrooms connecting, all three apartments warmed by grate fires, were made ready, and the new-comers took possession of them.

Monk's room opened off the cozy little parlor on one side, and upon the other side of the parlor was the airy bedroom, with two beds, that had been assigned to Bernice and Mrs. Crawl. The young marchioness was undressed by her attendant, and put in her warm bed. The two conspirators then had their breakfast in the private parlor, Flack being served in the kitchen.

Monk and Mrs. Crawl were still at their breakfast when the inn mistress came up to inquire if she could do anything for the poor young lady, and desiring to know what she could do for her.

"She would like some chicken broth," said Mrs. Crawl. "Her appetite is very poor. She lives almost entirely upon stimulants, poor dear! and they seem to affect her intellect. She has the most horrible ideas. Her mind somehow seems to revel in the ghastly and unreal. She is very low, and keeps her bed for the most part. I fear we shall hardly get her home alive."

The inn-keeper was about to reply, when the door of the bedroom opened, and Bernice, wan and spectral, with great burning eyes, stood upon the threshold.



CHAPTER IX.

A PLAUSIBLE EXPLANATION.

For a moment a dead silence reigned in the little inn parlor, during which the eyes of Gilbert Monk, of Mrs. Crawl, and of the inn mistress were fixed upon the wan young face of Bernice, as she stood in the doorway, wrapped from head to foot in the long black cloak with which Monk had provided her, and looking in upon them with a tremulous and uncertain eagerness of gaze. The eyes of the inn mistress were full of curiosity; those of Gilbert Monk and Mrs. Crawl were full of anxiety and dread. They had miscalculated the strength of the last dose administered to the young marchioness. They had not expected her to awaken so soon. They trembled lest her first words should arouse the suspicions of their hostess. Yet Gilbert Monk did not lose his presence of mind. He made a gesture to Mrs. Crawl, who arose quietly and approached Bernice.

Lady Chetwynd waved her back with a feeble movement. There was a vague look in the girl's face, a weakness and wavering in the expression of the dusky eyes, that declared that the influence of the narcotic still lingered. She was not broad awake, nor was she alive to her whereabouts. There was a pressure still upon her brain the weight of an intolerable sleepiness and fatigue.

She was nearly in the condition of a somnambulist, and was conscious only of a vague longing, an irresistible yearning for her young husband. Everything else—her present surroundings, the singular presence of Mrs. Crowl—were not even thought of in her present mental chaos.

“Where is Roy?” she asked, in a weak voice, thrilling with alarm. “I want Roy. I want to go home! Take me home—now!”

“Yes, dear,” said Gilbert Monk, assuming a paternal air, “we are going home as fast as possible—”

The girl started and looked at him in a faint wonder and surprise.

“That is Gilbert’s voice,” she murmured, “but the face is not Gilbert’s—it is older than Gilbert’s—”

“Poor child!” sighed Monk in an undertone. “Her mind wanders. She is talking of her brother now.”

Mrs. Crowl laid her hand gently upon the arm of the youthful marchioness, who, puzzled and bewildered, retreated before her touch. As the slender, black-robed figure disappeared into the bedroom, Mrs. Crowl followed and locked the door on the inner side, remaining with Bernice.

“It’s a sad thing to see a girl so young so near her end,” said the inn mistress, wiping her eyes. “I’ll go down and order the young lady’s broth at once, sir. And whatever I can do, while you remain to better the young lady, I shall be glad to do.”

She courtesied and took her leave. When she departed Mrs. Crowl opened the door, emerging into the parlor.

“The young lady is asleep again,” she announced. “I shall guard against such happenings in the future. She will awaken again soon, I think, and must then have her breakfast. I see no way to manage her

except to keep her continually under the influence of narcotics."

"I don't like to do that," said Monk, thoughtfully. "She must awaken now and then to take food, or she will die. When she arouses again I will see her."

About an hour after this the inn mistress sent up a tempting little breakfast for the supposed invalid. Mrs. Crawl set the tray on the hearth, and went softly into the inner room to look after Bernice. The girl was turning restlessly on her pillow, and at the sound of cautious movements opened her eyes and was awake.

"Do you feel better, Miss!" asked Mrs. Crawl, in a soothing voice, leaning over her.

"Why, this is not the cottage!" said Bernice, with a glance of surprise at the papered walls and comfortable bed; "and it is not the Park! Where am I?"

"At a little country inn," replied Mrs. Crawl, truthfully enough. "I have your breakfast ready for you. Mr. Monk is in the parlor outside, and he will explain everything to you as soon as you have taken food."

"But I should be at home now," said the girl. "Where is Roy? I don't understand why I should be at an inn. I must see Gilbert immediately."

"Yes, Miss," said Mrs. Crawl, quietly but firmly; "but you must have your breakfast first, so that you will be strong for the interview; and you must be dressed, too. You cannot see Mr. Monk in your night-dress."

Bernice regarded the elaborately trimmed night robe she wore, but she made no comment upon it. She began to feel that she was breathing an air of mystery, but she was still too weak to attempt to probe it.

Mrs. Crawl brought her breakfast to her, and she ate in an utter silence, but with reviving appetite. After the meal she fell asleep again through utter weariness,

and did not awaken until late in the afternoon. Then her dinner was served to her, and afterward she insisted, in a pretty, peremptory way, upon rising and being dressed. Mrs. Crawl brushed out the girl's long crinkling mass of purple-black hair, letting it stream over her shoulders as she had always worn it. One by one the girl's garments were put on; not those she had worn in her coffin, but others as fine and delicate and richly trimmed, which Mrs. Crawl had procured in London for the use of Bernice before having seen her.

The long white silk burial robe had been packed away with the remainder of the burial garments, and Mrs. Crawl produced a soft, gray cashmere robe, made in a fashionable style, and put it upon her young charge.

"Now you don't look so much like a corpse, Miss," she said, cheerfully. "That white ruffle about your neck is all the white you want near a face so colorless as yours. Wait till I tie this black ribbon around your neck below the ruffle. There, that will do. Now let me take you into the sitting-room, where Mr. Monk will explain everything to you."

She lifted the young peeress in her arms, and carried her into the outer room, as if she had been a child. There was a bright fire in the little parlor, and a chintz-covered couch was drawn up before it. Mrs. Crawl laid Bernice upon this couch, propped up her head with pillows, laid a bright traveling rug over her knees, and went back into the bed-room as Monk quitted the window at which he had been standing and came to greet his victim.

"My dear Bernice," he said, taking her thin hand in his, "I am glad to see you so much better. I have been very anxious about you. Your experience has

been so terrible that I feared you would be seriously ill."

"It seems as if I had been having a terrible dream since you rescued me from the church, Gilbert. You started to take me home, I know, and I fell asleep in the church porch. When I awakened I was in a way-side hut near Chetwynd Park. I slept again, and have awakened here at a way-side inn. I can't understand it. You said you would take me home. It is daylight now, and we should have been home long before day-break. Oh, Gilbert, are you not going to take me to Roy? Or are you not going to send for him to come to me? I am wild with impatience to see him. Why, he is mourning for me as dead! I must get to him. What does all this delay mean?"

Her thin, sharpened features worked with her agitation and distress. She made a motion to arise.

Monk sat down beside her, and took her fluttering hand.

"Be calm, Bernice," he said, in a tone meant to be reassuring. "Can you not trust me? Did I not rescue you from your tomb when your own husband had left you as dead? Can you not realize that I am your true friend, your brother? Be brave, Bernice. Shall I tell you why I have not taken you home?"

"Roy is not dead?"

"No, no. He is well and safe. The truth is, Bernice, he took the first train to London after your burial. He went the same night—before I rescued you. I dared not tell you before, lest the disappointment and the delay in seeing him would work you mischief."

"Gone to London?"

"Yes. He was overcome with grief, and went away for a change. He went with his relatives, who were obliged to return to town immediately. Sylvia accom-

panied him to town, and will visit Chetwynd's aunt. The Park is in the charge of servants. I would have taken you there, or to Mr. Sanders's house, but in either case rumors of your restoration to life would get about, and might reach Chetwynd's ears before we could break the news carefully to him."

"Yes, that is true," said Bernice, sighing.

"And that is not all. You are still very feeble. I have not dared to risk exciting you too soon, lest we lose you again, and forever. Believe me, Bernice, I have acted for the best. And, to tell you the truth, I could not have done otherwise, since I do not know Chetwynd's address, and must go up to town to search for him. I must break the glad tidings to him myself. Bernice, your safety must be my first consideration. I will find a proper refuge for you, and then I will leave you in safety while I search for Chetwynd, who may have gone to the further end of England with his relatives, for aught I know."

Bernice was too weak to combat Monk's arguments, had she differed in opinion with him. She believed herself in safe hands. Had not Gilbert Monk rescued her from her very sepulchre? And as he had saved her life, would he not, of course, hasten to restore her to her husband at the earliest possible moment? She had an implicit confidence in him, and implicit reliance upon him. Still, her disappointment in not being restored to the marquis at once was almost more than she could bear.

"Where can you take me, Gilbert?" she asked, presently. "Not to the rector's house. The rector is infirm, you know, and a widower. It is not best, you think, to take me to the bailiff's house. He has a family of children, and I should be besieged with visitors and questionings before Roy could come. And I dread

going to the park, if only servants are there. Where can I go?"

"I have a little place on the Welsh coast," said Monk, hesitatingly. "I might take you there. It is secluded and I should not fear to leave you there with Mrs. Crowl while I seek for Chetwynd. The spot is romantic beyond description. You and Roy could spend your second honeymoon there, and remain until you are entirely recovered, and until the nine days' wonder to be excited by your resuscitation shall have died away. You will like to be secluded for a little, I am sure; hidden away from coarsely staring eyes and wondering faces. It will be a hard trial for you to go back to the Park while the sensation of your marvellous restoration is in full vigor."

Bernice shuddered, and shrank back among her pillows.

"I—I don't think I could bear it," she said, shrinkingly. "I am too weak to bear the gossip and staring, Gilbert. I would like to hide away in your lonely house. Take me there, Gilbert, and then find Roy and bring him to me. Roy never told me that you had a house of your own, Gilbert."

"It is not my own," acknowledged Monk. "It is one I hired lately, after your marriage. I got it at a merely nominal rent, and so took it. You see, Bernice, I fancied that I should be driven out of Chetwynd Park by the new Lady Chetwynd, and that it behooved me to find new quarters. I believe I had a fancy to set up a bachelor's hall in Cardiganshire. My funds are meagre, you know, and any home within range of my means must necessarily be out of the world. It's a long journey, but I think it would be the best place to take you. Indeed, I know of no other place."

"Then take me there, Gilbert. But if the journey is

long, can we not go by rail? I can bear the fatigue, Gilbert, and I am so impatient and anxious."

"I could secure a compartment to ourselves," said Monk, musingly. "I could telegraph to the old Welsh housekeeper to have things in readiness for our arrival. When I expected to go there, I sent up a lot of supplies for household consumption, and, no doubt, old Elspie could make us comfortable after a rude fashion. If you are willing, Bernice, we will journey on in the morning by rail."

Bernice assented eagerly. Monk talked with her an hour or more, and then she closed her eyes in very weariness. She was not asleep. Monk knew it by the pained expression about the sorrowful mouth, by the spasmodic contraction of her brows, and by the suppressed agitation of her features. She was suffering acutely, but it was not physical pain. Monk left her to her anguish, and walked again to the window and looked out.

The result of this momentous interview may be told in a few words.

Bernice, believing herself in the hands of friends, too weak to reason clearly, or to fathom Monk's sinister motives, or even to suspect their existence, too frank and guileless herself to suspect guile in others, yielded herself to Monk's guardianship without a murmur, and was eager to accompany him to his "house on the Welsh coast." And thither they went, as fast as steam and horses could carry them.

On reaching the desolate castle, in the dead of night, Monk opened the carriage door, and said:

"We are at our journey's end, Bernice." And there was a sinister joy in his eyes, and sinister exultation in his voice. "We are at Mawr Castle,"

Upon that very evening on which the rescued young marchioness arrived in Wales, Lord Chetwynd sat in her boudoir at Chetwynd Park. He was alone. The curtains were lowered over the windows, shutting out the night. The lights burned mellowly in the clustering, tinted globes of the gasalier. The fire burned cheerfully in the grate. The piano was open, and a sheet of music was upon the rack, as Bernice had left it. There was an arm-chair and a dainty little work-table in the recessed window, just as she had arisen from them. Before the hearth was her writing-table as she had last used it. Lord Chetwynd was opening it now with tender, reverent fingers.

In the three or four days that had elapsed since the funeral of Bernice he had changed wofully. His fair, effeminate face was worn with sorrow. His eyes, which at times were wont to flash like polished steel in the sunlight, were dull now, and hollow and sunken. They had shed many tears of late.

The key was in the little inlaid desk. The marquis pushed back the circular front, and the contents of the desk were revealed. Here were Bernice's private papers—few enough, and unimportant at best. No letters—she had never received one—but her diary, with gold clasps and lock and key, were hidden here like some great treasure. Chetwynd had taken the key of the little volume from his young wife's watch-chain, and he opened the book.

It was only a record of her life since leaving St. Kilda. It had been meant for no eyes save her own, and was a revelation of her pure and trusting nature, of her noble soul, of her worshipping love for her husband. It was full of genius, and sparkled with wit and humor. It was grave, thoughtful, tender and loving. It was to Chetwynd a message from the grave.

He read it on his knees, half blinded by his tears, breaking now and then into terrible sobs.

"My pure little girl! My true wife!" he moaned. "So young, so noble, so pure, so full of rare genius! Dead! Cut down like some worthless weed in the very spring-time of her youth. Oh, Bernice! Bernice!"

The tears we all have shed over our beloved dead came to ease his breaking heart. He wept long and unrestrainedly. Then he finished reading the little book, being still upon his knees. There were allusions to Sylvia and Gilbert Monk, full of affection and kindly interest. There was a description of Sylvia's beauty, and references to her sisterly kindness. There were paragraphs about the Gwellans and St. Kilda, anecdotes of Fifine, but not one word concerning what Bernice had been told concerning the former betrothal between Sylvia and Lord Chetwynd.

When he had finished reading the tiny volume, the young marquis locked it, and put it in an inner pocket of his coat.

"I shall place it in the library safe," he said to himself. "It is too precious to be left unguarded. And this is all?"

It was nearly all. There was a lock of Lord Chetwynd's hair, labelled in tiny letters, "My darling's hair;" there were several spirited pencil sketches, attempts at his lordship's portrait, but nothing more. Bernice's life had held no secrets, no mystery beyond that mystery of her parentage.

The young marquis sat long at the little desk, in the gleam of the fire, in the mellow light of the gas, in the scarlet glow of the draperies. He had not been in this room since the day on which his wife was supposed to have died, and now it seemed to him that her presence still pervaded the room she had loved.

He had grown calm again, but with the calmness of an infinite despair, when a gentle knock came upon the door. His pale cheeks flushed with resentment at the intrusion upon this hour sacred to him. He was about to arise to send away his visitor, when the door softly opened, and Sylvia Monk glided like a beautiful snake, into his presence.

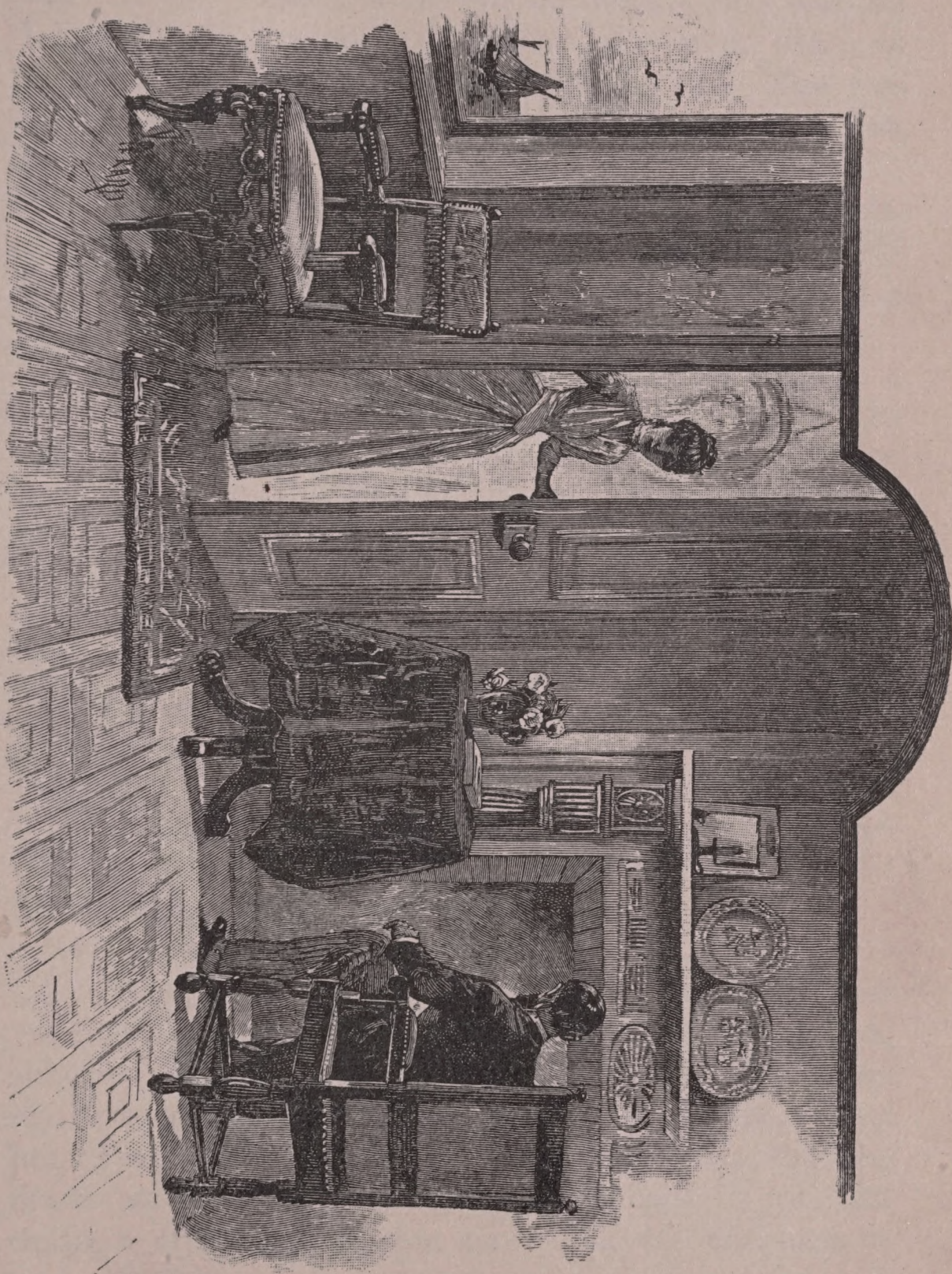
She was dressed in deep mourning, with crape covering her trailing robe of bombazine, and with jet ornaments in her ears. She wore a long jet necklace, to which was appended a black cross, giving her the look of a sister of charity. There was a frill of white at her throat. Her swarthy skin looked more swarthy than usual, and the vivid crimson on her cheeks stood in relief, as if painted upon them. Her dress was unbecoming, but she was by no means so hideous in her mourning garments as she had expected. Her heavy eyelids were drooping above her eyes of dull blackness, but the red gleam that betokened thoughts of evil was in their gloomy depths.

She came toward the marquis, with a slow, undulating grace, as if frightened at her own temerity, yet not daring to retreat. His lordship arched his brows in grave questioning.

"Oh, Roy !" cried out Miss Monk, in a sort of vehement tenderness. "They told me you were in here—for the first time since—since— And I have been standing outside the door in an agony, fearing that you would do yourself an injury. At last I could bear the suspense no longer. Oh, Roy, you will not commit suicide?"

Lord Chetwynd looked surprised.

"I am no coward to shirk the burden the Lord has laid upon me, Sylvia," he said very gravely, his voice tremulous with passionate grief. "I am sick of my



GILBERT MONK'S REVERY INTERRUPTED BY BERNICE.—See Chapter IX.

life. The joy has gone from it forever. I cannot learn to say 'The Lord's will be done.' She was all I had, Sylvia, my one ewe lamb! No other being in the whole world understood me as she did. She was my better self—my guardian angel! And I have lost her!"

His stern lips quivered in an uncontrollable anguish!

The false woman whose hand had stricken the light and beauty from his life, who had robbed him of his wife, blanched a little, and then came nearer to him.

"Oh, Roy," she said, "you do not suffer alone. I loved Bernice, too. She crept into my very heart during her brief stay with us. She was an angel, and she has gone to dwell with her kindred. My poor Roy, my heart bleeds for you. Here, in the room where she used to sit, let me comfort you."

"It seems to me as if she were near us, Sylvia. She promised, when she was dying to be my guardian angel, if she were permitted. I believe she is my guardian angel now—that she is here beside us at this moment."

Sylvia started and darted a glance about her of fearful inquiry. Her face grew livid in a sudden terror. She shrank within herself.

"I—I don't think she is here!" she said, huskily.

"I hope and pray that she is," said Lord Chetwynd. "I hope that she reads my heart like an open book, that my soul is laid bare to her gaze, that she knows all my love and agony and despair! If God has permitted her to return to guide me, rest assured, Sylvia, that she reads us thoroughly, that she knows us at last through and through, that our souls are laid bare to her. The thought is sweet—"

Miss Monk's teeth chattered. A horrible fear came

upon her. Her superstitions were all alive. She sent peering glances behind the furniture and into the distant corners. She quailed at the thought that perhaps Bernice now knew of her guilt, and meant to haunt her evermore.

"Your fancies are morbid, Roy," said Miss Monk, in a sickly voice. "You frighten me, and set my nerves all quivering. I am almost afraid to remain here. The doctor must give you a tonic to steady your nerves."

"You are very kind, Sylvia," he said. "Bernice loved you. I do not forget. You gave brightness to her life here. She never had a girl friend before. I want the doors of these rooms kept locked, and you must keep the keys, Sylvia. Sometimes you must come in here and dust her books and things, but leave everything as when her hands last touched it. In the dressing-room one of her little slippers lies on the floor as she cast it off on the night she was taken with her chill. In her pin-cushion she thrust her brooch. Leave them so. Do not move them, not even to dust them. Everything must be as she left it."

"Yes, Roy. You are going to change your rooms, then?"

"I am going away, Sylvia. I cannot remain here while my wound is fresh. I start a dozen times each day, fancying that I hear her voice calling me, or her step on the stair—just as she prophesied, Sylvia. I can never learn resignation here, when I am continually reminded of the joys I have known, but shall know no more. I have talked with the bailiff to-day, and shall leave things in his hands as during the summer. I beg you to remain at Chetwynd Park. It is your home, Sylvia. The servants will respect your authority, and you will be mistress."

"Shall you go in your yacht?"

“No. I last shared its state-room with her. I am going on to the Continent, I know not where. I am full of unrest. I may go to Egypt, to Syria, to Africa. When I shall have learned to bear my sorrow with patience—perhaps sooner—I will come back. I shall do as my demon of unrest impels me.”

Miss Monk reflected that Lord Chetwynd's absence would relieve her from the necessity of feigning a grief she did not feel. He would be likely to forget Bernice sooner among the romantic scenes of a foreign land. Upon the whole, it was best that he should go. When he should return, she would look fresh to him. And then she could venture to remind him of Bernice's aspirations for his union with Miss Monk, if he showed lukewarmness in his wooing, and all would go well, and her most brilliant hopes would in due time be realized. She felt sure of her ultimate victory, and so signified her approval of his resolve to travel.

“I shall not see you in the morning, Sylvia,” said the marquis, gravely. “Mrs. Skewer will wait upon me at breakfast. I will say good-bye to you now.”

He arose, and she imitated his example. He held out his hand to her. She seized upon it, pressed it, and suddenly raised it to her lips. The next moment, as if covered with confusion, and choking with sobs, she swept like a gilded snake from the room.

Lord Chetwynd spent the night in his young wife's rooms. He did not sleep. He walked the floor, wept, and prayed, and morning found him haggard and pale and hollow-eyed, fitter for a sick-bed than a journey.

His valet had packed the marquis's travelling bag. The man called his lordship soon after daybreak, and the young lord went to his dressing-room and made his toilet. Then he descended to the breakfast-room.

The pretty apartment was bright and cheerful with a

glowing fire, snowy napery, glittering crystal and silver, and daintiest painted Sévres porcelain. It was not Mrs. Skewer who presided at the coffee-urn, but Sylvia Monk, graceful, sorrowing, her swarthy beauty heightened by a few artful touches, a tremulous smile on her red lips. Lord Chetwynd looked surprised, but greeted her kindly, and took his place at the table.

The meal was eaten nearly in silence. The marquis drank his coffee, leaving all else untouched. He arose abruptly, muttered something in a choked voice, and held out his hand in farewell.

"I am going to the door with you, Roy," said Sylvia, tenderly.

The marquis shook hands with his weeping butler and housekeeper, and broke away without a word. Sylvia Monk followed him out to the carriage porch. His lordship's valet, the son of one of his tenants, was upon the box with the driver. Mr. Sanders, the bailiff, hat in hand, was waiting on the steps, intending to accompany his lordship to Eastbourne.

For the last time Chetwynd held out his hand to Sylvia.

"I go," he said, brokenly. "Henceforth, till peace visits my heart, I am an exile from the home of my fathers. God bless you, Sylvia. A last good-bye."

He wrung her hand, but made no movement to kiss her.

"Good-bye, Roy. May the peace you desire come to you in the course of your wanderings. It will come. No one can grieve always. I shall expect you back in a single year. Remember, Roy, in a single year. But whether you come in one year, Roy, or in ten years—whether sooner or later—you will find me waiting for you."

And with those words ringing in his ears, Roy, Marquis of Chetwynd, turned his back upon his home and his country, and went wandering far in foreign lands.

CHAPTER X.

BERNICE AT MAWR CASTLE.

Mawr Castle, the retreat to which Gilbert Monk had brought the youthful Marchioness of Chetwynd, was a grim old stronghold of feudal times, throned upon a high and lonely rock overlooking the ocean. The walls were in ruins, the moat was nearly filled with stones and fallen buttresses, and the portcullis had rusted in its rest with centuries of disuse.

The castle had been uninhabited for years, save that one old woman found shelter in its walls. Gilbert Monk had visited the spot in a tour of Wales, and had remembered it as the loneliest, wildest scene his eyes had ever rested upon. It had been left in the charge of an old retainer of the family, who lived in a little hamlet by the sea, a mile below; and Monk, in his character of the father of an invalid daughter, had hired the castle of this person at a merely nominal rent for two years' occupancy.

It was, therefore, with the air of a landed proprietor, or lord of the manor, that Gilbert Monk lifted Bernice in his arms and carried her toward the grim and ruined pile. Mrs. Crowl followed her employer in silence. The driver of the carriage, having made inquiries, drove around the broken walls to an old

stone stable on the mountain side, and here stalled his horses.

Gilbert Monk carefully picked his way onward, his light burden in his arms, and guided now by a gleam of light that burst suddenly from an open doorway many rods in advance. He shouted loudly and a feeble response came to him. Then an old woman appeared in the doorway, holding her light above her head, and waving it slowly to and fro.

Thus guided, Monk and Mrs. Crowl safely completed their journey through the ruins, and arrived at the threshold upon which the old resident of Mawr Castle was standing.

"Is it the Englishman?" asked the old woman. "I see it is. You are welcome, sir. It's a hard walk across those stones, but last night was a wild night, sir, and the ivied wall fell in. You can easily pick your way by daylight, though, sir."

She retreated into the room with her light. The new-comers followed her, finding themselves in a great old-fashioned kitchen, with a stone floor, several tall, arched windows, a yawning fireplace, some quaint, high-backed wooden settles, and a dresser, whose shelves displayed utensils of brass and copper burnished like mirrors. There was a fire on the hearth, and Monk laid Bernice down upon a settle before it.

The old woman stirred the fire to a brighter blaze.

She was a fitting guardian for the ancient ruin, having also seen her best days. She was very old, and her thin figure was bowed, but there was a strong vitality within her still. Her eyes were keen and bright. Her hair, white as snow, was smoothly brushed under a high white cap of spotless whiteness. She walked with a staff, but she did not lean upon it. She was Welsh, and had lived all her life in the old castle. She could

remember, when, in her young days, gayety and brightness dwelt in those damp old rooms. But the glory of the Penrhynns was past; the daughters were married and gone; and the impoverished heir, an elderly man, was in distant India, carving his fortune with his sword. All these changes had wrought lines and wrinkles upon Elspie's aged face, but all her honest sorrow could not dim the kindly expression of her features.

"The young lady is tired," said Monk, briefly, noting the pitying look bestowed upon the young peeress by the ancient peasant woman. "We have travelled since before daybreak, and she is ill. You seem to have expected us. Are our rooms ready?"

"Yes, sir," replied the woman, in a strongly accented voice. "The furniture you sent here has been arranged as you directed. The man Flack assisted me. There have been fires in your rooms every day, to try out the damp. It's thirty years since them rooms were slept in. There are fires in them now. I have been all ready for you since yesterday."

"Very well," said Monk, approvingly. "We will go up to our rooms immediately. Take up your light and show us the way. I will carry the young lady, who is too tired to walk. Our driver will soon be in, and you must prepare him a hot supper. We are all hungry and chilled."

The old woman took up her candle and conducted the new-comers into a damp stone passage, up a flight of rickety stone steps to the drawing-room floor. The rooms upon the floor above this leaked, and were damp, mouldy and unwholesome. In fact, the few habitable rooms were upon this floor, and old Elspie hastened to exhibit them.

The state drawing-room had not been used for thirty years and was dismantled. The little furniture that

remained in decent preservation had been gathered into a little square parlor overlooking the sea. The great blazing fire, and the great, wide, uncurtained window, gave the room a cheerful aspect.

Beyond the parlor were Bernice's private apartments, all warmed with hot fires. The dressing-room and bedroom were newly and neatly furnished. Beyond the bedroom of Lady Chetwynd, and connected with it by a door, was a second bedroom, designed for the use of Mrs. Crawl.

Monk's room was at some distance from these, down the long hall and a second corridor. His room had once been a morning-room, or private boudoir, and was still in tolerable preservation.

Monk deposited his burden upon a sofa in the parlor, and the girl stirred feebly, and spoke for the first time since her arrival at the castle.

"I am not hungry—only tired," she said, wearily. "Let me go to my room."

"Your dressing-room is next to this, Miss," said Mrs. Crawl, "and your bedroom is beyond. I'll carry you to your room myself."

She suited the action to the word. She undressed Bernice tenderly, and ensconced her in the warm, well-aired bed, with its furnishings of dainty linen and soft blankets. Lady Chetwynd fell asleep upon the instant. Mrs. Crawl took up the candle and explored the two rooms. Having satisfied her curiosity, she returned to the parlor. The round table had been spread, during her absence, with a supper.

"I shall leave here in the morning, in the carriage we came in," said Gilbert Monk. "I will return within a week, and bring with me books, a few engravings, and some music. There is a cottage piano here. I sent it up from town. Let Flack come to meet me at

Carnarvon, on the evening of Monday next. I'll ride home in my own carriage, seeing I own one. I have used my money lavishly lately, and my funds are running low. I will replenish my purse while I am away."

He finished his supper, and went to his own distant room. Mrs. Crawl retired to her own room, adjoining that of Lady Chetwynd.

The next morning breakfast was served in the little parlor, which was bright and cozy by daylight.

Monk was first in the room, and paced to and fro impatiently, looking frequently at his watch. He had paused at the immense window to watch a fishing smack on the billows, when Mrs. Crawl entered with the young marchioness.

Monk sprang forward to meet her. He had washed off the paint upon his face, and looked as boyish as formerly. Bernice noticed the change in him with a vague sense of relief.

She was very wan and pale still ; very weak and full of trembling ; but she looked better than she had done since her rescue from the burial vault. She held out her thin, brown hand to Monk, who seized upon it, pressing it fervently.

"I am glad to see you looking so like yourself, Bernice," he exclaimed. "I shall have less anxiety about you during my absence. I start this morning for London, there to begin my search for Roy. I shall bring him back with me. Will you promise to be content while I am gone—to get strong and well as possible? I want to present to Roy, not a ghostly wife, with the pallor of the tomb upon her, but a wife who is happy, and flushed with returning health. He will deem you doubly restored to him then."

"I will try to get strong, Gilbert," said the youthful peeress, sinking into the chair to which he had led her.

"You are very good to me, and I am very grateful. Mrs. Crowl will take good care of me in your absence, and I will pray every hour for your safe and speedy return."

"I shall come as soon as I can, Bernice. I shall know no rest until I return. You will not be troubled with visitors. There are no neighbors nearer than the fishing village, a mile below. No one will call upon you or molest you. You are safe here, and I trust will be contented."

There was some further conversation, and then the meal was over.

Gilbert Monk kissed Lady Chetwynd as a brother might have done, and she clung to him for a moment as to her only friend. Then she tottered away from him to the window and he went out. Mrs. Crowl accompanied him to the waiting carriage, and presently returned, announcing that Monk was gone.

Gilbert Monk had two objects in view in his journey to London. First, he desired Lady Chetwynd to think that he was searching for her husband. It was necessary to his plans that the young marchioness should think him her best friend and devoted to her interests, should rely upon him, trust him with the fullest confidence, and should feel the utmost dependence upon him.

His second object was to procure more money, of which he was in urgent need. Accordingly he did not stop in London, but hastened down to Sussex and Chetwynd Park.

His delight may be imagined when he learned from his sister that the marquis had left England, and had gone no one knew whither.

Fate seemed playing directly into his hands. He felt in that moment the conviction of his ultimate and perfect success in his villainous and nefarious schemes.

His joy at Chetwynd's departure was greatly augmented by the discovery that the marquis had provided for his—Monk's—pecuniary wants, by leaving a thousand pounds for his use with Mr. Sanders, and he hastened to apply for it. After a long and private interview with Sylvia, he walked through the chill shadows of the home park to the house of the bailiff, got his money, returned to the Park and dined with his sister. After dinner he proceeded to Eastbourne, and thence to London.

He remained in town two or three days purchasing books, a few choice engravings, and various other articles for the use of Lady Chetwynd. Burdened with these, he returned to Wales, arriving on the evening he had appointed for his return.

Flack was awaiting him at the railway station of Carnarvon. The trunks and parcels were transported to Monk's carriage—which he had bought at second-hand—and the employer then said, in a low voice :

“I take it for granted, Flack, that all is well at the castle. I could not speak before all those guards and porters. Is the young lady doing well?”

“Very well, sir,” said Flack. “She walks among the ruins every day, and asks eagerly when you are likely to be back. She does not know I came to meet you to-night. Lor', sir, this an't no abduction case. Why, she's unhappy without you, and just pining for you to get back. She's regularly in love with you, and no mistake.’

Monk smiled. He had not enlightened Flack in regard to Bernice's identity, leaving him still to believe that he—Monk—was the girl's lover.

He climbed up to the box, as did Flack, the trunks and parcels being put inside the carriage, and drove

down the streets of Carnarvon on their way to Mawr Castle.

Lady Chetwynd had long since retired, but Mrs. Crowl was up and dressed, and waiting for Monk. There was a tempting supper spread for him in Bernice's little parlor, and he sat down in it and was served by his confederate.

"How does the young lady get along?" he asked, sipping his wine.

"She is as impatient as a caged eagle," replied Mrs. Crowl. "She is still weak, but walks about the rooms, and watches the sea, the waves and the boats, and asks me every day if I think you will come to-day. She will not read, nor take things quietly. She wants 'Roy.' To-day I called her 'Miss,' as usual, when she told me, with a little haughtiness, that she was the Marchioness of Chetwynd. I cautioned her not to repeat the statement to old Elspie or the man Flack, for that Lady Chetwynd was dead and buried, and I saw her obituary in the court papers myself. She's a proud, high-bred, aristocratic young creature, and as ignorant of the world as any young baby."

"So much the better. I like mettlesome women. You may tell her in the morning that I am come, I will meet her at breakfast."

Having satisfied the cravings of his appetite, Monk departed to his own room.

He was in the little parlor at nine o'clock in the morning, standing before the fire, warming his hands—the day was chill—when he heard a little ecstatic cry in the adjoining dressing-room, and the other door opened, and Bernice came running out to him, her wan, brown face aglow, her eyes shining like twin suns.

She looked at Monk—past him—at the door—the window.

Then the flush faded from her face, leaving her ghastly pale.

"Where—where is Roy?" she faltered. "Did you not bring him, Gilbert? Is he in the hall?"

Gilbert Monk's swarthy face assumed an expression of tender commiseration. He approached her, took her hand in his, and led her to a sofa.

"I am come alone, Bernice," he said, with seeming sorrow.

"Alone? Where is Roy? Not dead, Gilbert? Oh, not dead?"

Her wild young voice rang like a wail through the room.

"No, not dead, Bernice. He has left England, and not even Sanders, the bailiff, knows where he has gone. He said he might go to Africa, India, China, or Australia. He may have gone to the wilds of America, to the Brazils, or to the North Pole. He has gone and left no trace behind him!"

"Oh, merciful Heaven! Gone! A wanderer! And I living—I waiting for him!" wailed Bernice. "Oh, Roy, Roy!"

A death-like faintness swept over her, and her head fell on her bosom. Monk brought restoratives to her and she soon revived, but she was weak and drooping, and her wan, piteous face was full of a wild despair.

"Do not give way like this, Bernice," said Monk, gently. "I know you are physically weak, but let your high spirit uphold you. You can bear this trial. It is not as if he were dead. I have brought you the court papers—see—with the account of his departure. Read this!"

He unfolded a copy of the court journal and exhibited a marked paragraph.

It was to the effect that the Marquis of Chetwynd "whose recent romantic marriage with a young lady of the island of St. Kilda we but lately chronicled, and who has just been cruelly bereft of his young wife by fever, has left England upon a prolonged tour, whose aim and end are uncertain. His lordship is much broken by his terrible bereavement, and will seek change of scene in far romantic lands. We trust his self-imposed exile will be brief, and that he will soon return to his native country in improved health and spirits.

Bernice read the lines in a sort of stupefaction.

"He may die where he has gone!" she murmured, with white lips. "He may never know that I did not die, Gilbert—that I am still living!"

"He will come back within fifteen months, I am assured, Bernice," said Monk, cheerfully. "He is safe enough. There is a year of separation between you; that is all. Can you not bear that bravely? Will you pine and die of grief in his absence? He is gone, and it is impossible to trace him. I have tried, but vainly. The world is bigger than you dreamed, Bernice. We can do only one thing—wait! How and where are you to pass the time of your husband's absence?"

A blank look overspread the girl's despairing face.

"What am I to do, Gilbert?" she asked. "I cannot go back to Chetwynd Park without him; indeed I cannot. Every room there would remind me of him. He might hear too abruptly of my presence there, or if he did not hear it, people would frighten me with their starings and questionings. Oh, no! If Sylvia was there, I might take shelter in her friendship; but she is gone, you say—"

"To the north of England," said Monk, falsely. "The Park is shut up, Bernice, the servants dismissed,

and only the butler, Mrs. Skewer, and a maid or two and the grooms in charge. You could hardly remain there with only servants for companions. You have this house, Bernice. I have taken a lease of Mawr Castle for two years. It is hidden away from the world, in a mountain region, on a desolate rocky coast. You have said that the scenery reminds you of that of St. Kilda. No visitors will ever intrude upon you here. Mrs. Crawl will remain with you. You have horses and a carriage at your disposal. No one need know you as the Marchioness of Chetwynd, who is believed to be dead and buried. If your identity were known, the superstitious villagers below might annoy you. You could pass as Miss Gwellan—it's a Welsh name, you know—and live here in safe obscurity till Roy comes home. I should be much of the time in London, but could come here at any moment at your summons, and should come to see you once a fortnight. It is the only safe place I know of for you. Be guided by me, Bernice, and remain."

"You are my best friend, Gilbert—you saved me from an awful death—you brought me back from the grave. I love you as if you were my brother. I will stay here."

Monk pressed her hand respectfully, and with seeming affection.

"I know the world better than you do, Bernice. I'm a man of the world; I know that you have chosen well to remain here. And now I want you to make me a promise. It's for your own good, my dear little Bernice, and Roy would approve it. There is a certain horror attaching in England to any one who has been buried alive. It is much the same as the horror experienced at sight of a criminal who has been hanged and resuscitated. People draw away from one who has been rescued from the grave; they whisper aside, they feel a

horrible awe, they are afraid. It is as if one had come back from the other world. To spare your sensitive soul the anguish of feeling yourself thus outcast for no fault of your own, my poor Bernice, I want you to promise me not to reveal your name and identity to any human being without my permission."

The girl shuddered at the picture he had drawn, but having implicit confidence in him, accepted his statement unhesitatingly.

"I promise," she said, "excepting Roy—"

"Excepting no one," said Monk, firmly. "I know Roy's high-strung nature. The sudden shock of finding you alive, whom he mourns as dead, would kill him. When the time comes I will prepare him to receive you. Am I not your best friend, Bernice? Did I not save you? Am I not devoted to your interests? Have I not just been up to London searching for Roy? Have faith in me. Promise me that not even to Roy will you betray the secret that you still live, until I tell you it is time. Prove your gratitude to me, and your faith in me, by this promise."

"But, Gilbert—"

"You do not trust me, then—me who saved your life?"

"I do—I do. I promise, Gilbert."

"I want more than this, Bernice. I shall not be happy until I have restored you to your husband. I shall send men in search of him, but I have no hope of finding him. He will return in his own time. The only reward I ask is that you will permit me to take you to your husband when he comes. And so promise me, Bernice, that even if you meet him, if you should stand face to face with him, if he should even speak to you, you will not betray your identity to him. If I am

living, I beg to be allowed to restore you to him. Do you promise?"

The girl in strange agitation, gave the required promise.

"Swear it, Bernice," persisted Gilbert Monk. "Swear to me that, if I am living, you will allow me to be the first to declare your identity with that Marchioness of Chetwynd who was buried last week in Chetwynd church—swear that not even to Roy, whatever the temptation, you will reveal the fact that you live until I give you permission. This is all the reward I ask for saving you to your husband."

"I swear it, Gilbert," said Bernice, with a trusting look into his swarthy face. "It is but a small return for your great goodness to me, to allow you the joy of bringing Roy and me again together. And so I swear what you desire, and may God punish me if I break my vow."

She spoke with a deep solemnity that ought to have thrilled the heart of her listener. She felt burdened by her great debt of gratitude to him; she trusted him and relied upon him. And thus it was, although with secret pangs, for she would have preferred to remain unfettered, she took upon her a solemn vow which she would never dare to break. She had been educated by the stern old minister of St. Kilda to respect her word as an oath and to deem a vow registered in heaven.

"It is understood, of course," said Monk, lightly, "that if I am out of England the vow is null and void. Only, if I am in England, Bernice, I shall feel that you are rewarding me royally if you allow me to bring you and Roy together. I love you both. Roy is a brother to me. And now about personal affairs. I have plenty of money. I have bought you books and a hundred trifles. Is there anything else I can do for you?"

"You think Roy will be absent a year?"

"Fifteen months, at least."

"I am not a skillful player on the pianoforte," said Bernice, thoughtfully. "My French, too, in comparison with Roy's has an English sound. Gilbert, why may I not improve this year by studying hard and better fitting myself for my position as Lady Chetwynd?"

"You could, easily enough. It is a good idea to occupy your mind. Shall I procure you a French governess, Bernice, to teach you her language, music, dancing, and deportment; in short, one of those accomplished creatures known as a finishing governess? I see no need of her tutelage; Roy thinks you perfect; but I shall be glad to bring you an instructress if you desire."

"I do desire it. Roy shall find me accomplished beyond his highest hopes when he returns. He shall find his little wife polished, a fine musician—all that fashionable ladies are. I know he intended me to take lessons in music this winter, and in drawing also. Gilbert, how can I thank you for your goodness to me? I ought to be patient—you are so kind."

"If the French governess comes, it might be better to abandon the name of Gwellan altogether," said Monk. "Suppose you call yourself Miss Bernice Gwyn? You are willing? Very well. Miss Bernice Gwyn it shall be, and you have as much right to it as to the name Gwellan. I hope you will be happy here. A year will soon slip away, and then I hope to restore you to your husband."

The programme thus outlined was carried out.

A French governess, an accomplished and elegant woman, a grand dame in reduced circumstances, the widow of a noble French refugee, was secured as the instructress of "Miss Bernice Gwyn," and duly installed at Mawr Castle.

The days and weeks and months that followed were busy ones to young Bernice. She studied with the ardor of an enthusiast. She became proficient in the French and German languages ; she became an accomplished pianist and singer, developing the talents God had given her. Her dormant genius bloomed into a rare and glorious development. She waited, she watched, she hoped. In the nights her pillow was wet with her tears. She prayed for her young husband's safe return with every hour of the day. And so, blossoming into her glorious womanhood with its rare dower of genius and a surpassing beauty, Bernice passed that long year of waiting.

During all this period Monk had been living in London as a man about town. The time had not arrived for him to make his grand move in the game.

Other months dragged on until fifteen months had passed since the Marquis of Chetwynd had exiled himself from home and country. Gilbert Monk grew anxious and uneasy now, also, under all his careless seeming, and Sylvia Monk waited with "hope deferred" until her heart grew sick within her.

But at last, one day in March, when Gilbert Monk was seated in Scotsby and Newman's inner office, with a very gloomy frown on his swarthy face, meditating upon a trip down into Sussex upon the morrow, with intent to borrow money of his sister, a telegram was brought to him. Monk tore it open with a thrill of expectation. He believed something had happened. The telegram was dated Chetwynd Park, and was signed with the name of Sylvia Monk. It was as follows :

"Sanders has had a letter from Chetwynd at last. It came to-day. His lordship is at Genoa, and on his way home to England."



CHAPTER XI.

TURNING UP STRANGELY.

In the picturesque bay of Genoa, on a certain March day, a trim little steamer lay, her engine puffing noisily and her sailors rushing to and fro in all the hurry and confusion of intending immediate departure. This steamer belonged to an Italian line, and was bound for Marseilles.

At one end of the vessel were grouped the few passengers, some of them Italian, some French, one an Englishman.

The Englishman was the young Marquis of Chetwynd. He stood apart from his fellow-voyagers, leaning lightly upon the taffrail, and regarding the scenery as if he meant to photograph it upon his memory.

He was on his way home to England.

He had travelled far during his fifteen months of self-imposed exile ; and now, tired of his wanderings, and yearning to see once more the green fields and shaded park of his own domain, was hurrying homeward, beset by the same restlessness that had characterized him since the hour he had consigned his young wife to the tomb.

He was looking now at the long piers, at the lighthouse, at the grand amphitheatre of the fortified city seated upon a slope of the mountain side, and meditat-

ing upon the beauty of *Genoa la superba*, when a sudden lull of the noises on the deck aroused him from his reverie. He looked around him. The freight was all on board. The vessel was ready to start, yet she was waiting. The captain, who had halted near the marquis, was looking shoreward, with visible impatience.

"What's wrong, Captain?" inquired the young lord, speaking in Italian. "Are you expecting some one?"

"Yes, an English milord," replied the captain, knitting his brows. "I give him just five minutes more. Ah, there he comes now; is it not so?"

Lord Chetwynd turned his gaze shoreward. A tall Englishman was approaching the waterside with swift and hasty strides. He came down upon the quay, summoned a boatman with an imperative gesture, and was rowed out to the waiting steamer. He climbed lightly aboard, tossing a couple of coins to his rower, and as he strode along the deck the vessel moved slowly out upon the sunlit waters of the bay.

Lord Chetwynd surveyed his fellow-countryman with singular interest.

He was a tall, grandly formed man of some forty years, with hair and eyes of dead blackness. His beard was long and thick, and also coal-black. He was of noble and distinguished presence, of commanding air, of reserved and haughty demeanor, and possessed a pair of eagle eyes, a scornful mouth, and an expression of disdain and cynicism.

Chetwynd read in the brown, finely cut face traces of some sorrow as mighty as his own. The stranger's gloom oppressed him. He felt intuitively that this new-comer was a proud, high-spirited man who had suffered terribly—and who suffered still.

His glance of interest attracted his compatriot, who, after a moment's hesitation and apparent struggle with

himself, approached the young lord and stood beside him at the taffrail. The two were silent for some moments, watching the receding shores, and Chetwynd then addressed the stranger, making some allusion to the romantic character of the scenery.

"You are English, then?" said the new-comer, abruptly, replying, as Chetwynd had spoken, in the English tongue. "I thought so. That fair hair of yours and that yellow moustache betray your nationality, although at the first glance I took you for a German. I have not spoken to an Englishman in years. I generally avoid my countrymen abroad," and his lips curled in a cynical smile. "I chose this line of steamers because I believed that I should not meet many of my countrymen upon it. It seems that I was right, and that you and I are the only representatives of Britannia on board."

Lord Chetwynd made an assenting response.

"You are unlike most Englishmen who rush abroad to 'do' Italy or the Continent in the shortest possible time," observed the stranger, after a pause. "Perhaps it is the novelty of again meeting one of my countrymen—perhaps it is that I am, after all, not a desperate hater of my kind—but, whatever the reason, I am interested in you. As we are to be fellow-voyagers, suppose we exchange addresses?"

"Willingly. I am the Marquis of Chetwynd; and you?"

"I am Basil Tempest. I am returning to England after an absence of many years spent in China and Tartary."

A glow of recognition came into Chetwynd's face.

"You are Tempest the explorer!" he exclaimed. "I have been familiar with your name for many years, sir. I have read your books, and studied your course through

wilds where no Englishman has penetrated before you. I admire your pluck, your energy, your devotion to science. I am happy to make the acquaintance of the distinguished traveller, Tempest."

Chetwynd spoke with an unaffected heartiness and sincerity that touched the world-weary soul of the great traveller. When he held out his hand in English fashion of greeting, Tempest grasped it with a firm and lingering pressure.

The night came on dark, with a fierce wind and a rough sea. Chetwynd went up on deck at a late hour, and stood leaning against the side of the vessel, watching the phosphorescent gleam of the furious waters.

"It's a wild night," said the voice of Mr. Tempest, at his elbow. "I wonder how those poor wretches can sleep below in those close and stuffy state-rooms. I like to witness this warring of the elements; to see those giant white waves rush upon us like furious white chargers attempting to ride us down. I like storms and conflicts of power such as this, when sea and wind are fighting."

"I have had so much of unrest in my own life of late," said the marquis, sighing, "that all I long for is peace."

"Have you, too, known sorrow?" asked Mr. Tempest.

"Who has not?" was Lord Chetwynd's bitter response. "It is only fifteen months since I lost my wife. I cannot speak of it."

"Did your wife die?" asked the explorer, in a strangely moved voice.

"Yes, she died. Did you not hear me say that I lost her?"

"Yes; but wives are sometimes lost to us when they do not die," said Mr. Tempest, with an odd thrill in his deep musical voice. "You ought to know peace, Lord

Chetwynd, if she is dead—if she died loving you. My God! why are you not happy? She is safe, and your heart must thrill at the memory of her loving words, her tenderness, her love. I had a wife once, and I lost her. But she did not die. It was her loss that made me what I am, Tempest the explorer.”

There was a few minutes' silence between the two, during which the laboring of the engine became more plainly marked and perceptible.

“You must not misunderstand me,” said Mr. Tempest at last, in a voice that sounded broken. “My wife did not abandon me. I adored her. She was well born, but poor. She was a beautiful young girl when I first saw her, and she had already several suitors. I loved her, and her father approved my suit. I was rich, you see,” and he spoke bitterly; “so her father favored my suit. She had another devoted lover, handsomer than I, but she seemed to look coldly upon him. I courted her and married her. She received my caresses coldly; she never spoke a word to me; she was an iceberg. Fool that I was, I believed she acted out her nature. And I lavished upon her all the hoarded tenderness of my heart, and believed that she loved me in a feeble way in return. But one evening—we had been married some three years then—I returned home unexpectedly. I entered the house with my latch-key. I heard voices in the drawing-room, and went thither. I must have opened the door softly, for no one heard me. I stood on the threshold and saw my wife in her favorite chair, with a man kneeling at her feet. He was the handsome lover she had discarded for me. He had just returned from a long absence abroad. He was telling her how he loved her, and had always loved her.”

Mr. Tempest paused his voice choked.

"But that proves nothing against your wife, Mr. Tempest," said the young marquis. "She might not have encouraged his declaration. She might have loved you—"

Mr. Tempest laughed sneeringly.

"You have not heard all," he said. "I listened for her answer, with my heart in my throat. And what was her answer? She broke out into a passionate fit of weeping, and forbade him to speak to her in that manner.

"She confessed that she had always loved him; but that he was poor, and she could not mate with poverty; that her father had compelled her to marry me, but that she abhorred me; that she wished she was dead and in her grave, that she might be free from me. And then she raised her head and retreated from him, wringing her hands wildly and begging him to leave her.

"I heard it all. I felt like a tiger in that moment. I could have leaped in upon them and torn to pieces the fair, false creature I had so adored. But I restrained myself. I shut the door softly and went up stairs. Of course, all was over forever between me and the woman who married me for my money and position, and who hated me. I would not longer torture her by my presence. I resolved that she should be free from me in this world. I sat down at the desk and wrote her a letter, telling her that I had heard all, and that she was free. I left the house before her lover quitted her. I have never seen my wife since. I suppose that she believes me dead, and is married to *him*. I shall never let her know that I am living."

"Perhaps she is dead?"

"Perhaps. I am going back to England to see her grave if she is dead, to catch a glimpse of her face if

she is living. I shall not reveal myself to her, and I am not returning to see her, Chetwynd, but to fulfill a sacred duty which I have too long neglected. I have long been haunted by the fear that I might die and leave that duty unfulfilled. It is that duty that brings me to England. I never told my story before, but there are moments of weakness known to every soul when one longs to unburden all one's sorrow, and to hear a comforting word. Such a mood is upon me to-night. The fact that I am nearing England, and that I am speaking once more in my half-forgotten tongue, seems to break up my stony calmness of years. In this friendly storm and darkness I have indulged in unwonted frankness. I shall repent it to-morrow. So forget what I have said, and let it be as if it had not been."

Lord Chetwynd sought the explorer's hand and grasped it warmly.

"Your sorrow is worse than mine," he said. "Let us be friends. You stand alone in the world ; let me be something more to you than a stranger. I never met a man I was so drawn to at first sight. Shall we be friends?"

"As you will, although a worn and weary man like me is no fit friend for you."

The two men talked throughout the whole of that dark and dreary night. Near daybreak Mr. Tempest went below. When he appeared at breakfast, he was again the cool, cynical man of the previous day.

The weather cleared during the day, and in due time the trim little steamer labored into the port of Marseilles. Lord Chetwynd and Mr. Tempest went to the same hotel. They journeyed to England together, and stopped at the same quiet family hotel in Piccadilly, London, arriving there late at night.

Before Mr. Tempest was astir the next morning, Mr. Sanders, the Chetwynd bailiff, and Gilbert Monk had made their appearance, and were shown up to Lord Chetwynd's rooms.

They found the marquis up and dressed, and they were received with the heartiest cordiality.

"I received your telegram, dated Paris, yesterday, my lord," said Sanders, "and I hurried up to town by the first train. Mr. Monk was at the Park, and he came up with me. The news that you are coming home has made a great sensation in the county, and every one is glad."

"You have been greatly missed, Chetwynd," said Gilbert Monk, in his smiling, boyish way. "Your tenants wanted to get up a celebration of some sort, and Sanders had all he could do to restrain them from sending up fireworks in your honor."

"I will go back with you to-day," said the marquis, quietly. "I have a friend who journeyed with me from Genoa, and whom I will endeavor to persuade to accompany me home. It is ten o'clock. I will see him now."

He excused himself, and went to Mr. Tempest's room. The explorer bade him enter.

Mr. Tempest was in his little sitting-room at breakfast. His table was littered with newspapers of every description, whose contents he was eagerly devouring with the mental hunger of a man who has not seen a newspaper printed in his own language for many years.

He arose at Chetwynd's entrance, but immediately resumed his seat.

"I am already welcomed by my step-brother and my bailiff, whom I left in my room, Mr. Tempest," said Lord Chetwynd, when they had exchanged salutations,

"I am expected home to-day, and I am now come to beg you to go home with me. My house is at your service, and I shall be glad to have you for my guest as long as you will honor me by staying. Will you come?"

The great explorer shook his grand head sorrowfully.

"I should like to go," he said, "but I cannot. I have a sacred duty to perform. I alluded to it once in speaking with you, you may remember. I came on to London because London is a central point, and then, too, it is on my way. I leave town to-night. I have a sea voyage before me full of perils, but I cannot defer it longer. Some time I may visit you, my lord, but now our paths part here. May God bless you and make His face to shine upon you."

He arose and took Chetwynd's hand. A few more words were said, then farewells were spoken, and Chetwynd returned to his friends. A little later he left the hotel with them and set out upon his return to Sussex.

Mr. Tempest resumed his seat and the perusal of the morning journals.

Suddenly he uttered a great appalling cry that rang through the room, and the newspaper dropped from his hand.

"What! Dead!" he whispered. "Dead!"

He caught up the paper again and read the paragraph with protruding eyes and corpse-like visage. The paragraph that so affrighted him was as follows, and was an extract credited to the *Glasgow Evening Mail*:

"TERRIBLE DISASTER AT SEA.—We learn that the fishing Schooner *Wave Rider*, owned in Glasgow by the Messrs. Dunallen, was lost at sea with nearly her entire crew on the 10th ult. She had on board as passengers the Rev. David Gwellan and wife, of St. Kilda.

"The Rev. David Gwellan has been for many years

minister of St. Kilda. His health had been very much broken for a year past, and he was returning to Scotland to consult an able physician when he met his untimely fate. Mrs. Gwellan was a Scotch lady by birth. We understand that the unfortunate couple leave no children, their adopted daughter, Miss Bernice Gwellan, having died over a year since."

Mr. Tempest stared at the concluding sentence in a rigid horror.

"Dead!" he said, hollowly. "Bernice is dead! The Gwellans are dead also! I have waited too long. I have left my sacred duty undone, and now it is too late! Bernice has been dead a year. I shall never see her to implore her forgiveness for leaving her all her young life on that dreary island. I shall never feel her kisses on my cheek, never hear her call me father. In all my imaginings I never dreamed of this. Oh, Bernice! my poor, wronged child! outcast from her father's heart because of her mother's falseness and deceit, shall I never see your innocent face again? Now I know that, unsuspected and unknown to me, I looked forward to a reunion with my child. My child! My God, I am written childless! I am alone! I have no voyage to make now. One look at my false wife's face, myself unseen, and I shall go back to Tartary."

He bowed his grand head and wept aloud.

Lord Chetwynd drove home from Eastbourne in an open carriage with Mr. Sanders and Gilbert Monk, in the dull gloom of a lowering March afternoon, under the frowning English sky, which seemed continually upon the point of dropping rain upon them. His lordship's heart was heavy. It was impossible that he should not be reminded of that other home-coming when he had brought his young bride home with him,

His eyes fell upon the gray stone parish church, with its slender stone spire, and he exclaimed :

“Sanders, was the tablet put up as I directed?”

“Yes, my lord,” said the bailiff. “The inscription, as you wrote it, was cut into marble, and the slab of marble was let into the church wall, and fixed solidly into place.”

His lordship sighed heavily.

The carriage turned in at the lodge gates, and the marquis aroused himself to speak to the lodge-keeper. He was silent as they passed up the avenue.

They drove into the carriage porch, and Chetwynd alighted and went up the steps with a pale face and still silent mien. There was no marshaling of servants in the great hall. The butler and the housekeeper stood inside the door to give their master welcome, and at a little distance in the shadow of the grand staircase, like some bird of ill omen, stood old Ragee, the Indian nurse of Sylvia Monk, her withered black face looking weird and witch-like under her heavy red turban.

The marquis shook hands with his faithful servants, bowed to the old Indian woman with his never-failing courtesy, and allowed the butler to pull off his great-coat. Ridding himself of gloves, cap and muffler, his lordship passed into the drawing-room, Monk and Sanders lingering in the hall.

The drawing-room was very inviting after the chill gloom without. Among the various pictures adorning the room was a fine portrait in oils of the young marquis, painted two years before. This portrait was exquisitely wreathed with flowers, and under it, upon a small bracket draped with amber velvet under point lace, was a lovely bouquet of odorous blossoms.

A sudden moisture dimmed Chetwynd's eyes at this evidence of regard for him. Only one person in the

house was capable of so delicate a tribute of welcome. He looked around for her. The long, luxurious room had no occupant beside himself. He called quickly, half impatiently :

“ Sylvia ! ”

There was a fluttering sound in the inner drawing-room, and Sylvia Monk, tall and regally handsome in her swarthy East Indian beauty, dressed in a sort of half-mourning, wearing a sweeping robe of purple velvet and ornaments of gleaming purple amethysts, with a red gleam in the dull blackness of her now open eyes, red roses on her dusky olive cheeks, and a smile of rapture on her red lips, came softly, swiftly, to meet him.

He held out his hands to her, but she put up her face to be kissed.

“ Oh, Roy, dear Roy,” she breathed, in a rapturous voice, resting her head upon his shoulder. “ Welcome home—a thousand times welcome ! ”

She drew back from him upon the instant, as in maidenly modesty, and he noted the flush that mounted to her face, her eagerness and excitement, and in her drooping eyes he read the fact that she loved him.

He withdrew toward the fire with a feeling almost of repulsion. He had no wish for love other than a calm, sisterly affection.

Miss Monk took the alarm, and swept after him to the marble hearth, and laid her hand upon his arm, and said in a low tone of tender pleading :

“ Dear Roy, if you only knew how I have looked forward to this hour ! I have thought of you by day and by night. I have wondered where you were, and wept and prayed for your return. And now you are come, and I find you changed—cold—constrained—”

Her voice gave way in seeming sobs. She drooped her head.

"Not changed to you, Sylvia," said Chetwynd, affectionately, taking her in his arms. "My dear sister, of whom I have often thought in my wanderings. I am not the man I was two years ago. My sorrow has changed me, but I am the same Roy to you."

He kissed her, and at the same moment Gilbert Monk and Sanders entered the room. Sylvia slipped away from his lordship, flushed and satisfied, and Monk and the bailiff exchanged significant glances.

Sanders remained to dinner, and retired with the marquis to the library soon after, having requested a few minutes' private interview with his lordship.

"I don't care to discuss business this evening, Sanders," said the young lord, as the two entered the dim Moorish library. "We will look over the accounts any day you like, but not to-night."

"It was not to talk of the accounts that I asked a few minutes' interview, my lord," said the bailiff. "You will find them all right whenever your lordship may be pleased to examine them. I hope you will pardon my presumption, my lord, but I love you as if you were my own son, and I would give much to see you happy. I can hardly say what I wish. It is about Miss Monk."

"Well, Sanders?" said his lordship, kindly.

"I deemed it only just to say to your lordship that there is a report that Miss Monk is to be married to you. People knew of your early betrothal to her, and I desire to suggest, for the sake of the lady herself, that if there is no prospect of marriage between your lordship and her, Miss Monk ought to be sent away from Chetwynd Park."

"Where could she go?"

"I don't know, I'm sure, my lord. This is her only home."

"You have taken time by the forelock assuredly,

Sanders, in speaking to me on this subject upon the very day of my return," said his lordship. "Miss Monk has a right here, and she will stay in spite of the gossips. I do not intend to marry again."

"But, my lord," cried Sanders, eagerly, "you are so young still. It is your duty to marry. Who is to inherit Chetwynd after you? Your lordship may perhaps never love again as you have loved, but surely some reward is due to the lonely woman in yonder who has waited the best years of her life for you, and who loves you better than she loves her own soul. No one knows that I am making this appeal to you. I am overstepping the bounds of my proper sphere, but I am an old man, Lord Chetwynd; I loved you in your boyhood—I love you still; I know you will forgive my presumption. Miss Monk was your mother's choice for you; young Lady Chetwynd loved her. My lord, you know what a cruel thing gossip is. Forgive me—"

"It is all right, Sanders," said the marquis, gravely. "But say no more. We may talk more of this at some future time. I am not offended. You are going? Well, good-night."

Sanders took his leave. He had spoken to Chetwynd from a conviction of duty, but had not said half he intended.

Chetwynd returned to the drawing-room. Monk and Sylvia were there, the former pacing the room uneasily, the latter seated before the hearth with a dainty bit of wool embroidery. Sylvia looked up brightly as his lordship entered, and dropped her work upon her lap. The marquis approached her and took a seat near her, the words of the steward mingling in his thoughts with the last words of Bernice.

His lordship had a grandly chivalrous nature. The fact that this woman loved him, and that the gossips

made busy with her name, therefore entitled her to his tenderest protection. He did not love her except in a fraternal way, but he began to question within himself if he ought not to marry her. He had been betrothed to her. His mother had desired the marriage. Bernice had begged him to marry Sylvia. People evidently expected such a marriage, and Sylvia herself seemed to expect it. He began, therefore, to moot the question in his own mind.

Sylvia, smiling sweetly upon him, was conscious of the struggle going on within him. Her love and ambition were both aroused, and she bent herself to the task of winning him now, upon that very night. She meant to renew her betrothal before she slept.

Gilbert Monk continued to walk to and fro. He was equally anxious with Sylvia for her marriage to Chetwynd. Until that marriage should come off his game in regard to Bernice was blocked.

He was thinking thus when the hall porter opened the door and approached him, saying :

"Mr. Monk, there's a low fellow in the hall who says he must see you. His name, which he says it's Flack—"

Monk started.

"Flack !" he ejaculated. "Why, he was a servant of mine. I'll see him."

He hurried out into the hall. Flack stood just inside the great portal. Monk went up to him and asked, in an undertone :

"What's up? Why are you here?"

"Mrs. Crowl she sent me," said Flack. "Miss Gwyn left Mawr Castle the day before yesterday, and we haven't seen her since."

"Left the castle?"

"Yes, sir, along with a porkmantle, which she carried

in her hand, and wearing of a gray dress and veil. Mrs. Crawl she thinks Miss Gwyn came this way, sir. It's along of a newspaper which came around a packet of wools which the French governess bought at Carnarvon. The newspaper had a parrygraph that Lord Chetwynd was at Genoa, and on his way home. That unsettled Miss, and she made off the same night. Have you seen her here?"

"Thunder! no. She's here, or in the neighborhood," cried Monk, in a panic. "You must watch here for her, Flack. Go over to the village inn and look for her there. Be in the edge of the park on the east side of the house after the lights are out. I must see you then—consult with you. I cannot stay here longer without exciting suspicion. We must find the girl to-night."

He returned to the house, concealing his anxiety and perturbation as best he could. He passed the drawing-room, going through the music-room to the great conservatory, into which the drawing-rooms, music-room, and the pink boudoir opened. He sat down in a dim nook among the flowers, his heart beating fiercely, and muttered:

"Bernice here! Bernice back at Chetwynd Park! She will respect her oath. She will not reveal her identity or presence to her husband; but why does she come? I fear there's mischief ahead."



CHAPTER XII.

THE FIGURE IN WHITE.

From the low, rustic seat upon which Gilbert had flung himself, he could look into the bright drawing-room and hear the low murmur of voices.

"I wish Chetwynd would fall in love with Sylvia," thought Monk; "but he remains wedded to his first love. I wish he would feel bound in honor or compassion to propose to Sylvia this very night. If she were very skillful I should think she might lead him on. If he were really and actually engaged to Sylvia, I think I could manage Bernice."

It seemed as if the fates were playing into his hands that night.

While he lurked in the great conservatory that flanked one end of the house and opened upon several state apartments, Sylvia sat in a low chair before the fire, her gay bit of woolen embroidery upon her knee, the soft light falling in a flood upon her swarthy, handsome face, red cheeks and glossy black hair, conscious that she was looking her best, and presenting a pretty picture to the long homeless young lord.

"I am glad to be back again," said the marquis, his grave brows shadowed by his ceaseless unrest and bitter longings. "I thought in Abyssinia that I would

give all I owned to transport myself in an instant back to this dear old home. And now I am here, in the rooms *she* brightened with her joyous presence, and the pain of being here is greater than I could have dreamed. It seems as if Bernice were near me, Sylvia. I have never had that strange sense of the nearness of her presence since I lost her. It seems as if she were in these rooms—as if she might appear to me at any moment—as if I might hear her voice calling me.”

“That is very natural, and very naturally explained,” said Sylvia, in her smooth, silvery voice. “You left this place so soon after dear Bernice’s death that her presence still seemed, as one might say, to pervade the house. You come back after a long absence, and everything reminds you of her. You have not grown used to the house without her.”

“Shall I ever get used to the house without her?” asked Lord Chetwynd, in an impassioned voice.

“The edge of our grief must wear off some time,” said Sylvia, softly. “It must lose its first sharpness, and become a vague and tender memory. Perhaps when I’m gone you will find repose in your fond memories of Bernice. I love Chetwynd Park, and all the people upon the estate. This is the only home I have in the wide world. But I must leave it. I am going away soon, next week, if possible, and I shall never return again.”

“Why is this, Sylvia? Why should you leave your home?”

“Ah, that is it,” cried Sylvia, passionately. “It is not my home. I have no right here. Can you not see, Roy? Do you not understand? You force me to speak plainly. I have no claims upon you, Roy, and I can no longer live upon your bounty. Besides,” and Sylvia’s voice trembled with the consciousness that she

was playing her last card now, "my good name is my most cherished possession, Roy; it is, in truth, all I have, and people talk because I remain here."

"What do they dare to say to the presence of my step-sister in my house?"

"They say," replied Sylvia, drooping her head still lower, "that I was once betrothed to you, and that you jilted me. They say that—that I love you still, and that I am staying on here in hopes to win you. And so I must go, Roy. I could not stay on here so long as a spark of true womanhood remains in me. And so—and so—I'm going."

She covered her face and seemed to sob in an utter humiliation and anguish.

"There is only one way in which you can or will remain, I suppose," he exclaimed, impetuously, "and that is—as my wife."

"Oh, Roy!" cried Miss Monk, rapturously, cresting her head in serpent fashion, her dull eyes burning with lambent flames, her red cheeks flaming into deeper carnation.

For an instant Chetwynd paused, bewildered. Miss Monk waited for him to say more. He comprehended that his unguarded outburst had been interpreted as a half proposal of marriage. He was sick at heart for a brief space. Recovering himself, he said, with unconscious sternness:

"Sylvia, I never loved but once. My heart is buried with my wife. All my hopes rest in her coffin. We were once betrothed. You put an end to our engagement, as I fancied then, because you had discovered that you did not love me, and I married Bernice. My mother desired you and me to marry each other. Bernice, dying, urged me to marry you. Did she fancy, in that last hour, that you loved me? The dying see

clearly, it is said. Perhaps she had heard of our former engagement, although that is scarcely probable. My mother loved you ; Bernice loved you. I cannot permit you to go forth to a life of toil and hardship, Sylvia, sister, knowing what I am, and that I have no heart to offer will you become my wife ?”

The color flamed again in Miss Monk's face.

“Oh, Roy !” she breathed again, in rapture. “I love you. To be your wife is more than I had hoped. But I will devote my life to you. We will work together, and I know that I can bring back to you a portion at least of your lost happiness.”

Chetwynd smiled sorrowfully.

“Such a marriage is a one-sided affair,” he said. “I have so little to give in return for your love. But I can spare you the toil and hardship of a governess's life. I can shield you from contact with the busy world, and I will try to make you happy.”

Miss Monk arose swiftly and rushed toward him with her soft, undulating movements, and flung herself upon his breast.

He started back with a gesture of repulsion, but recollecting himself, folded one arm around her. They were betrothed again, and he could give her at least a brother's caresses.

“Oh, Roy, this hour pays me for all I have endured !” cried Miss Monk. “All I ask is to be allowed to make you happy. I cannot hope ever to take the place of dear Bernice, but in time I may come to fill a little niche of my own in your heart. I have suffered so much. My life has been one long death without you. Take me closer, Roy, and give me the kiss of betrothal. At last—at last I am yours.”

Chetwynd put both arms around her, and said in a broken voice :

"God bless you, my promised wife—my dear Sylvia ! and may your future happiness atone for the sorrows of your past."

He bent his noble head and pressed a kiss upon her willing lips. She held him to her, showering kisses upon him in a strange unreserve.

A sigh, a breath, a faint rustle, like the brushing of a wing or the movement of a woman's dress, came fluttering through the room.

Chetwynd, still holding Sylvia to his breast, involuntarily looked up.

His appalled eyes beheld a sight that held him dumb and motionless.

He saw standing in the wide archway of the open sliding doors that which he believed to be the apparition of his lost Bernice.

She stood against a faintly lit background of dusky blooms, perfectly revealed, yet in the midst of an odorous twilight that made her seem indeed a vision from another world.

She was dressed in white, as at her burial. Chetwynd's fascinated eyes noted that she wore a long, white silken robe like that in which he had consigned her to the tomb. He recognized the peculiar fashioning of the dress, for she had worn the one in which she had been buried at her first dinner at Chetwynd Park—that memorable dinner upon the very evening of her home-coming. The low, square-cut Pompadour corsage, with frills of point lace standing up about the slender throat and fair bosom ; the short sleeves ending at the elbow in a frill of lace ; the bared arms ; he recognized each separate feature of the toilet he had thought so charming.

But the face ! It was strangely changed, and yet he knew it, and his heart leaped up within him at the

sight of it. Bernice had been plain, with but the possibility of beauty, but this vision was gloriously beautiful, with the radiance of a rare and perfect loveliness. Spellbound, he continued to stare at her, noting the pure, frank brows shaded by crinkling masses of floating hair, the soft and perfect contour of her face, the tender witchery of the sensitive mouth, the unutterable yearning and longing in the great vivid eyes of dusk. She looked as if she longed to speak, but was restrained by some invisible power.

Sylvia's head had been buried in Chetwynd's breast. She wondered at his silence, and looked up, crying, fondly :

"Call me your promised wife again, dear Roy. Kiss me again. Am I not to be your wife? Are we not to be happy at last? Oh, my darling—"

She broke off abruptly, seeing the shadowy figure in the doorway. She stared at the vision as if it had been some demon sent to call her to her eternal home. Her hair seemed to rise on end. Her tongue was glued to her mouth.

The countenance of the seeming apparition changed to an expression of ineffable despair and anguish. She opened wide her arms as if to embrace Chetwynd, and so, with outspread arms, and yearning, anguished face, she slowly retreated backward like the airy vision she seemed, until she had vanished into the gloom beyond.

Not until the seeming spectre had disappeared did Lord Chetwynd arouse from his frozen silence. But then, as if galvanized, he flung Sylvia Monk from him in an utter forgetfulness of her, bounded across the room and into the conservatory. The wax lights were burning dimly in the great arched dome of glass, and there were dim nooks and shadows on every side. The marquis dashed down a wide flower-bordered aisle like

a madman. The glazed doors at the lower end of the conservatory and opening into the garden were open. He made for them, uttering strange and incoherent cries.

Gilbert Monk was standing near the door, as if brought to a sudden halt. He had seen Bernice enter the conservatory, but had been unable to arrest her movements. He had seen her but now depart like a shadow, and he was in the act of pursuit when Lord Chetwynd's swift approach made him halt. The schemer knew that a crisis had occurred in the fortunes of himself and Sylvia, and upon his present coolness his own future and hers depended. He was equal to the occasion.

"Why, what's the matter, Chetwynd?" he asked, in the utmost apparent surprise. "Good gracious! is the man mad? Where are you going? Why are you running? Great Heaven! you look as if you had seen a ghost!"

Chetwynd turned upon Monk, eager and impetuous.

"Did you see her!" he cried. "Has anyone passed out this way?"

"No one. I have been standing in the doorway here these fifteen minutes," replied Monk, with seeming truthfulness. "Whom do you seek? Sylvia?"

"It was Bernice!" said the marquis, all excitement. "I saw her as plainly as I see you, Gilbert—my dead wife, Bernice! Help me to search the conservatory—"

Monk put on a look of alarm.

"My dear Chetwynd," he exclaimed, "you are the victim of some singular hallucination. Your brain is turned. Have you forgotten that Bernice is dead? How, then, have you seen her? Do the dead return from their graves? My dear boy, let me send for Doctor Hartright. You have got a brain-fever."

Chetwynd shook off Monk impatiently, and searched the conservatory in every nook and corner, but he found no trace of his strange visitant. He dashed out into the garden, and Monk went with him, but they did not see again the slender, girlish, white-robed figure of the seeming spectre. At length they re-entered the conservatory, the marquis pale and distracted, and returned to the drawing-room. Miss Monk stood before the fire, her cheeks again glowing, but there was a look of awful dread and horror still in her eyes. She imagined that the spirit of the woman whom she believed she had murdered had returned to haunt her for her crime. In her first horror she had been a very coward. She had crept away up stairs to her own room, and had there given way to her terrors. The old East Indian nurse had given her her usual remedy—a soothing draught—and had comforted her, and inspired her with fresh strength and courage. Under all her superstitions and peculiar weaknesses, Miss Monk possessed an iron will and a remorseless nature. Nothing had, so far, stood in her way in her attempts to win Lord Chetwynd. Now that he was fairly won, and again betrothed to her, she was determined that not even a visitant from the other world should take him from her. Having resolved, she returned to the drawing-room only a moment before Lord Chetwynd re-appeared.

She welcomed his return with a look of gloomy reproach. Then, as if relenting, she swept toward him, caught his arm, and cried out :

“Oh, Roy ! why did you throw me from you ? Why did you dart away so abruptly ? You frightened me. How my heart beats still ! What is the matter ?”

Chetwynd was astonished.

“Did you not see Bernice ?” he asked. “Were you not also looking at yonder archway ?”

"I was looking at the archway," replied the consummate actress, "but no one was near it, Roy. What do you mean by your allusion to Bernice? It cannot be that you fancied you saw her?"

"I thought I saw her yonder, Sylvia. It is strange. I could have sworn that I beheld my lost wife. And you did not see her? Can it have been an illusion? Gilbert was standing near the doorway of the conservatory, and he says that no one came in or went out by that way."

Sylvia swept a sudden, keen glance at her brother; but his face was impassible. She determined to have an interview with him upon the subject later.

Chetwynd was staggered in his belief. He put his hand to his forehead, saying, hollowly:

"Can I have been mistaken? Was it all a freak of my over-excited brain? It is easier to believe that than to believe that the dead can return. And yet, could my imagination have pictured her in all that splendor of loveliness, in the glory of a perfected beauty, the lustre of a beauty such as I have never seen? I cannot explain it."

He leaned against the low mantel-piece, and Sylvia laid her red cheek on his arm in a caressing fondness.

"Gilbert," she said, proudly, "my place is here, at Roy's side, henceforth. May I tell him, Roy? Yes? Listen then, Gilbert. Our old betrothal—Roy's and mine—is renewed. We are to be married—Roy and I!"

"I congratulate you, Chetwynd, upon having won a true and loving heart," said Monk, extending his hand to the marquis. "This renewal of old relations will assuredly prove for the best. I suppose Sylvia won't mind my telling you now that she has loved you all along with a rare devotion. I hope you two will be happy."

"I am not myself yet," said Lord Chetwynd with a troubled smile. "I seem suddenly to make the discovery that I have nerves. I'll go to my room, if you'll kindly excuse me, Sylvia. I am greatly fatigued after my journey," and he withdrew, going up to the rooms he had occupied with Bernice.

Gilbert made a movement to withdraw into the conservatory, but Sylvia detained him. He was anxious to search the grounds, in hopes of discovering Bernice, and he submitted to his detention with an ill-grace.

"What do you want?" he asked with an exhibition of surliness.

"I want to know if you were in the conservatory during some fifteen minutes previous to Lord Chetwynd's 'optical illusion?'" demanded Miss Monk, with sarcastic emphasis.

Monk replied in the affirmative.

"And you saw no one enter or go out?"

Monk hastened to utter a negative.

"I don't believe you," said the refined Sylvia, with considerable rudeness. "I know better. I saw the ghost, if it was a ghost, and so did you. What is your object in denying the fact to *me*?"

"I have no object. I saw no ghost, and I can swear to my denial, if you choose. You must have been reading Mrs. Crowe. You would do better to think of the great victory you have won. I advise you to hasten your marriage. I have nearly run through my thousand pounds, and I want more. You remember that you promised me an annuity of a thousand pounds on your becoming Lady Chetwynd. Hurry up the marriage. That is my advice."

He kissed his fingers to her carelessly, and sauntered away into the conservatory.

Miss Monk looked after him with a puzzled frown.

"I wish I knew what scheme occupies him now," she thought. "Gilbert has changed during the past year. I must confess he is getting too deep for me. I can't fathom him. What prompts him to deny that he saw that figure in white? If it was a spectre, he must have seen it, since it was visible to both Roy and me. If it was not a spectre, what was it? On my soul, I believe Gilbert knows."

With this conviction, Miss Monk went up to her rooms. She found old Ragee in the dressing-room, just unlocking the doors of the precious East Indian cabinet. The old ayah started at Miss Monk's entrance, and hastened to lock the doors opening into the hall. She then returned to the cabinet, and opened the secret compartment and took out the tiny gold box of rare East Indian poisons.

"What are you going to do?" asked Miss Monk, sinking into an easy-chair.

"I want to see that my globules have not been tampered with," responded old Ragee. "I feel uneasy, Missy, about that ghost. It can't be possible that I made a mistake in the vial, but I intend to see. If I had made a mistake the girl would have died in her coffin all the same—no, she would have recovered her consciousness at the end of three days. It's all right, Missy, but I'll just make sure."

Miss Monk watched her attendant with languid interest, while the ayah opened the two vials we have before described.

"There were one hundred globules in each," muttered the old woman. "I took one out of vial number two, leaving ninety-nine. I will count them."

She proceeded to do so.

"It's right," she announced. "There are just ninety-nine remaining. I can't tell what made me so foolish,

but just as soon as you spoke of the ghost, I felt a desire to look at these vials."

"Look at the vial number three," said Miss Monk. "Still, that's all nonsense. It's all right, only there's one thing sure, Ragee—Gilbert knows something about that ghost, or whatever it was. He swears he saw nothing. I wish I knew what game of his own he was playing. There's one thing sure—he knows the secret of that mysterious intruder of to-night."

The old ayah's weird eyes gleamed with a sudden light.

She hurriedly seized upon the third vial, opened it, and began hastily to count its contents. A look of dismay came over her face when she had finished.

"Can't you make it count right?" asked Miss Monk, with sudden interest.

"There's only ninety-eight globules here," answered the old woman, blankly.

"And there were a hundred?"

"Exactly that—a hundred in each vial."

"You may have dropped a couple;" and Miss Monk began to search.

"Stay, Missy," said the old ayah, in a tone of deep significance. "Answer me a question: Was Gilbert at home on the day that Lady Chetwynd was taken ill?"

"Yes. Don't you remember that he was in my boudoir before dinner?"

"Was he in your boudoir before we opened this cabinet, and had our conversation about Lady Chetwynd?"

"Yes; he went out, and I called you, and we came in here."

"Ah! And he was back in three days' time?"

"Yes. I telegraphed him that Lady Chetwynd was

dead. You know all this. Why do you ask so many unimportant questions?"

"Simply to confirm my own suspicions and remembrances," said the old woman, her black face growing yellow. "Missy, Gilbert Monk is as keen as a tiger that scents blood. He suspected us. When he went out from your room that day he must have slipped in here. The doors were locked, it is true. How did he get in? With a bit of wire, perhaps. He is keen, Gilbert Monk. He hid in here; he heard all we said. I remember I went to my own room for another vial. Only one link is wanting to make the chain of my suspicions complete and deepen them into dead certainty. If you had been absent from this room a moment—"

Miss Monk uttered a singular cry.

"I was absent," she ejaculated. "Lady Chetwynd came to the door of my boudoir for a piece of music."

"Then all is clear. Gilbert changed the globules, and took an extra one out of this vial number three. He was back in three days. He gave her ladyship more of the drug. She was buried. He rescued her. He has hidden her somewhere all these months. Lady Chetwynd lives. It was no ghost, but Lady Chetwynd herself, whom you saw to-night!"



CHAPTER XIII.

A DISTURBING PRESENCE.

The announcement of old Ragee's instinctive conviction that Lady Chetwynd lived, and that it was herself and not her spectre Sylvia Monk had seen, was delivered with a startling vehemence that for an instant almost carried conviction also to Sylvia's heart. She looked appalled. The handsome swarthy face lost its deep red stain in cheeks and lips; the dull black eyes opened wide in an expression of utter terror and abhorrence.

"Alive! Bernice alive!" she whispered, hollowly. "Impossible!"

"Not impossible, Missy, if Gilbert Monk should have circumvented our plans," said old Ragee, nodding her turbaned head, her witch-like features working convulsively. "I did not suspect him of being so deep, but depend upon it he was hid in these rooms upon that day so long ago when we planned Lady Chetwynd's death, and he changed the globules, and has now in his keeping the globules you should have given young Lady Chetwynd."

"I don't believe it," said Miss Monk, with sudden vehemence. "I tell you it is not so. I would rather believe that I saw a ghost to-night than that I saw

the living Bernice Chetwynd. I can prove to my own satisfaction that it was not Bernice. If it were the true Lady Chetwynd in the body, where has she been all these fifteen months since her burial?"

"Gilbert might have kept her out of sight, for purposes of his own."

"If it had been Lady Chetwynd in the flesh," demanded Sylvia Monk, "why did she not speak? Why did she not rush into the room and throw herself in her husband's arms?"

The old East Indian woman shook her head. The question was to her also unanswerable.

Sylvia Monk's face began to glow with a certain triumph.

"Ah, you cannot answer!" she exclaimed with a thrill of jubilation in her silvery tones. "I thought not. And Gilbert was too unmoved and quiet to have suffered recent alarm. You have made a mistake in counting, or there were not originally a hundred globules in each vial," declared Sylvia, positively. "We have been scared beyond all reason. We will be watchful of Gilbert, but I am persuaded that I saw a spectre to-night."

She leaned back on the cushions of her chair in a delicious content. Old Ragee locked up her tiny gold box of deadly drugs, and restored them to the secret compartment of the Indian cabinet. As she locked the silver-mounted door of the latter, and pushed the silver butterfly into its place over the intricate lock, she shook her weird turbaned head and muttered, in a tone too low to reach Sylvia's ears:

"If Missy is satisfied, let her remain so. But as for me, I am not satisfied. I'll watch Gilbert. I'll examine his trunk and clothes in search of the missing globule. I'll dog him like his shadow. I'll know if a

spectre has come to haunt Chetwynd Park—if some strange woman is personating Lady Chetwynd—or if her ladyship is alive. If she's alive, there's danger for us ahead, and I must be on my guard to meet it. If she's alive, she'll not be living long."

The old woman set her lips together grimly, and a menacing look gleamed in her small, furtive eyes.

While Sylvia Monk was thus lulling herself into a false security, and while old Ragee was determining to probe the mystery that was so fraught with danger to her idolized young mistress, the lord of Chetwynd was in his wife's rooms, a prey to the keenest agitation and distress.

He had walked through the long-deserted rooms, noting that everything was precisely as Bernice had left it. Here was her favorite chair by the hearth of the boudoir; here was her desk; there were her books, her sketches; in yonder was her open dressing-case, with its gold mountings, its cut-glass bottles with golden stoppers, its boxes of exquisitely chased gold marked with his wife's monogram; in the spacious wardrobes of the dressing-room were the garments she had worn. The rooms seemed instinct with her presence. Chetwynd half expected to see her arise from some chair, or enter at the door, the impression of her near presence was so strangely vivid.

He walked for hours in the long closed rooms, until the fires burned low. Then, with his strange anxiety and restlessness still upon him, he retired to Bernice's bed-chamber. The bed was the same as when she had used to occupy it. He knelt down by the bedside and sobbed aloud.

For a long time he knelt there, and gradually he grew calm with the calmness of his old despair. He arose and turned down the gas-light to a dim half-light, in

which every object in the room was distinctly visible, and then he flung himself, fully dressed, upon a low couch before the hearth. He could not sleep in the bed in which he believed that Bernice had died.

He lay with closed eyes, a travelling rug drawn over him. He was tired and worn, and gradually a sense of sleepiness stole over him, and he dozed uneasily.

He was aroused suddenly, with the swiftness of thought, by a soft touch on his forehead. He did not open his eyes, and the touch descended again, as softly as a snowflake falls, upon his mustached lips. The touch was slightly chill, but it was like a silent, fluttering kiss.

He stirred—he opened his eyes.

And then he saw again the vision that he had seen hours before in the lower rooms. He beheld Bernice—Bernice in the development of a magnificent and splendid beauty—with the tender, innocent eyes he had loved; with the sensitive mouth; with the lithe, light, graceful, figure, and wearing still the white robes in which she had been buried. He lay still, scarcely daring to breathe.

She had glided from him to the distance of a few feet, and was regarding him with an ineffable love and anguish. She opened her mouth as if to speak, but no words came. She spread her bared arms, as if to enfold him.

“Bernice!” cried out the young lord, in a sharp, shrill voice. “Bernice, speak to me!”

She shook her head sorrowfully, and slowly retreated toward his dressing-room.

With a startling cry, he sprang up from his couch and bounded toward her.

She continued her swift retreat, looking backward at him over her shoulder with that radiant face of love and

sorrow, and disappeared in the dressing-room. The door closed behind her. Chetwynd dashed it open, but the vision was gone.

He explored the bath-room adjoining ; he ran out into the great hall, the door leading into which from the bath-room being unlocked ; he searched the great empty guest-chambers ; but he found no trace of his strange visitant.

His search aroused Miss Monk, and she appeared in a scarlet dressing-gown, her feet encased in slippers of white down, looking frightened, while old Ragee peered over her shoulder. Chetwynd apologized for arousing Sylvia, and made some unintelligible excuse, but kept up his wild search, being half beside himself.

He knocked at Gilbert Monk's door, but there came no response. The door was unlocked, and he entered the room. A light and fire was burning but Monk was not there.

Considerably puzzled at Monk's absence from his rooms an hour past midnight, the marquis returned to the hall, where Sylvia still stood, wondering and bewildered.

"Did you hear burglars, Roy?" cried Sylvia. "Is not Gilbert in his room?"

"No ; he is not there. I—I fancied I saw something, Sylvia, and I came to look. That's all. Good night."

"Was it—was it the spectre again, Roy?"

"Yes," said Chetwynd, desperately. "I fancied I saw her again. Good-night."

He went into his rooms and closed his doors, and Miss Monk, in great perturbation, retired to her own apartments. The two women urged themselves into a state of calmness after a little, but Lord Chetwynd walked his floors all the long night, and watched, and

listened, and waited. But the spectre did not come again.

Gilbert Monk, after leaving his sister in the drawing-room, had hurried out of doors, as we have said, in search of Bernice. The one great idea that possessed him was to find her. He comprehended that he stood upon the brink of exposure.

He searched the lawn, the shrubbery, the rocks overhanging the sea, the strip of beach, the boat and bath houses, and penetrated far into the park, peeping into nooks and glades and coverts, but he did not find her. He hurried in and out among the thick shadows of the trees for hours, and at last the conviction came to him that she had in some way eluded him.

"She may be hidden in the house all this while," he thought. "She may have gone to my room to plead with me to release her from her vow. Little Puritan! She is truth itself. But what a test for her, to stand before Chetwynd to-night, and not be able to speak to him! The girl's as brave and true as she is beautiful."

He acted upon his new idea, hurrying into the house and up to his own rooms. It was past eleven o'clock, and the lights were all turned off, or burning dimly. There was no one in the great hall, into which the faint moonlight streamed through the end windows. He opened his door. The fire and light were burning, but no person was in his room. It seemed to him, however, that some one had been there recently. The rug was disarranged, as if one had knelt upon it, and the fire seemed to have been lately stirred to a brighter blaze by an unskillful hand. He was sure Bernice had stolen in here in his absence, and had remained some minutes to warm herself, and in anticipation of his return.

"She'll come again," he thought. "She's like an

uncaged leopardess since she saw her husband. I'll wait here for her."

He left his door unlocked that she might enter silently, and flung himself into an easy chair in an obscure corner, and waited for her appearance. But the time wore on and she did not come. The great clock struck the hour of twelve, but still Bernice did not come.

Monk waited until a great fear came to him that Bernice might have entered her old rooms—might have seen her husband there—and carried away by the supreme ecstasy of the moment, and her joy at seeing him, might have permitted him to clasp her in his arms. A cold sweat sprang to Monk's visage. He pulled off his boots and put on a pair of cork-soled slippers, and then stole out again into the hall.

He crept to the various doors opening into the hall from Lord Chetwynd's suit of private rooms. He was certain that Chetwynd was in the bed-chamber. The sound of gentle and regular breathing became at last perceptible. Chetwynd was within—asleep. Bernice was not there. Yet he waited, watching, listening.

How the minutes dragged! At last he heard, or fancied he heard, soft footfalls upon the carpet within—the rustle of a woman's silken dress. How his heart beat now! He bent closer still at the keyhole. Ah! now he heard the cry of Chetwynd as he started up from his sleep—the name of Bernice! She was there!

Monk could have beat upon the door in his agony. He was sure that all was over now—that Bernice had broken her oath—that she had revealed her living presence to her husband. What remained for him but flight?

But now the door of the bath-room opened suddenly, and a slender, white-robed figure stole swiftly into the

hall, as if pursued, and glided like a beam of light along the hall to the rear intersecting corridor. It was Bernice ! Monk flew after her in his list slippers as silently as she. She ran fleetly down the long hall and turned aside into the corridor, Monk behind her.

They had scarcely passed beyond the great hall when Lord Chetwynd opened the door of the bath-room, and came out in wild pursuit. But Bernice and Monk were both beyond the range of his vision. The seeming spectre was flying along the dim corridor toward an unused portion of the extensive mansion, not stopping or looking back. She gained another hall, from which a flight of stairs ascended, and went up the steps with still rapidity. Monk came swiftly a little way behind her. She must have been conscious of the pursuit, but still she did not cast a backward look over her shoulder. Up one flight, then another, and Bernice had gained a region of unused attics in the more ancient portion of the dwelling.

She ran across a dim passage into a little bare and empty room, lit up by the moonlight that streamed in at the dormer windows. She had run into a trap, and seemed to realize the fact, for she ran about the room wildly, and then retreated to a farther corner, uttering a low, strange cry, and covering her face with her hands.

Monk entered the room and closed the door.

Bernice, in her moonlit corner, panted and trembled. Monk pushed the bolt home in its socket, and approached her.

"Bernice !" he said, softly.

The girl started, with a ringing cry, and looked up at him with distended eyes.

"Gilbert !" she ejaculated. "I—I thought it was Roy."

"No, it is I. I heard from Mrs. Crowl that you had strangely disappeared from Mawr Castle, and I knew you would come here. I arrived myself only to-night."

"With Roy? Oh, how he is changed, Gilbert! My poor darling! How grave and stern he has grown! And how his soul leaped out at me from his eyes! He is looking for me now. Hark! Is he coming this way?"

"No, Bernice. These rooms have not been used in years. He will not find you."

"I must go to him," cried the girl, in her sweet, impetuous voice. "Now—now—this minute! I knew you were at the Park, and I went to your old room, Gilbert, but you were not there. Release me from my oath. I must go to my husband."

"Bernice, listen to me. I have something to say to you first—"

"Not a word. Why, he's looking for me now. He thinks me a ghost. Release me from my oath. I *must* go to him. Is he calling? Let me go, Gilbert. In God's name, let me go to my husband!"

"Not yet, Bernice—not until you listen to what I have to say," said Monk, firmly. "Chetwynd thinks you a spectre, as you say. He will go back to his room presently. There's time enough; but you must listen to me."

"Then speak quickly. How can I wait? He thinks me dead—he wants me—"

"How do you know that he wants you?" asked Monk, in crisp, hard tones.

Bernice scarcely seemed to understand.

Monk repeated the question.

"How do I know? Why, because I want him. Oh, I do love him so! I must go to him. Release me from my oath, Gilbert—"

"Hear me first. Bernice, I have thought you the bravest, the noblest, the most generous of women, but you are selfish like the rest. You are not capable of self-sacrifice."

"What self-sacrifice?" asked the girl, in a sharp whisper.

"Are you capable of a sublime self-abnegation?" demanded Monk, his black eyes all aflame. "Can you immolate Self on the altar of your husband's happiness. I have thought that there was in you the stuff of which martyrs are made; but, bah! you are like all the rest, regardful only of your own petty love. And yet there have been women who have sacrificed themselves for their husbands—"

"Gilbert, what do you mean?" cried Bernice, her voice ringing sharply on the air.

"What was your last act before falling into the trance in which you were consigned to your tomb?" asked Monk, in a stern voice.

Bernice seemed about to answer, but paused, deathly white.

"You remember? Your last act was to clasp the hands of Chetwynd and Sylvia Monk together. And what were your last words?"

No answer came from the girl's white lips. She began to understand his drift.

"Your last words were to beg Chetwynd, after a suitable season of mourning for you, to marry Sylvia Monk," declared Gilbert, in his passionless voice. "Was it not so?"

Bernice looked at him dumbly, a world of gathering woe in her great vivid eyes of gloom.

"You do not contradict me. Your last act before your seeming death was to reunite those two who had been so terribly parted. And they were glad you gave

them back to each other. After consigning you to the burial vault, Chetwynd returned home and had a private interview with Sylvia. In that interview all was made straight between them. Chetwynd thought it best to spend the year of his mourning abroad, and he went. He would not expose his future wife to malicious comment. He returned to-day. This very evening Chetwynd and Sylvia renewed their former engagement. Your day is past—it is another's now! Your place is filled. You are not wanted here. The revelation that you live will only bring dismay and horror. Bernice, from my soul I pity you! My heart bleeds for you!"

The girl dropped silently on her knees in the wide stream of moonlight, and bowed her head low on her breast.

"There have been women," said Monk, after a long silence, "so self-abnegating that upon such a return to life they would go away in silence, without revealing the blasting secret of their continued life. Are there such women now?"

There was a long and terrible pause. Monk waited in breathless suspense for her response, but he had long to wait. At last her low and broken voice cut sharply through the stillness, with the words:

"But I am his wife, you know. We said, 'until death do us part,' and I'm not dead, Gilbert. His second marriage while I live would be illegal."

Not so. Death annuls all ties. You seemed to die, and were buried. You are supposed to be dead—you are dead, in the eyes of the law," said the villain, with an air of reluctant sincerity. "If you were to re-appear, it is possible that your marriage ceremony might have to be performed again to make you Chetwynd's wife. I repeat, that in the eyes of the law you are dead.

Chetwynd's second marriage would be legal and valid."

The girl, brought up in a far island of the sea, knowing nothing about law, profoundly ignorant upon many points on which an English school-girl is well informed, having implicit reliance upon and faith in the man who had rescued her from the tomb, believed him !

"I will go away," she said, in a voice so strange that Monk scarcely recognized it. "I am dead in the eyes of the law. It will be no crime for them to marry. I heard him call her his 'promised wife'; I saw him kiss her. They shall be happy. I love him so well that I will die even for his sake !"

"And you will go back to Mawr Castle?"

The girl nodded dumbly.

"I'll find Flack. He shall hire a carriage, and drive you to some station beyond Eastbourne. It would not be well for you to be seen even in Eastbourne. Flack will accompany you back to the castle. You have done a brave, grand and noble thing in giving up Roy, Bernice. I admire you for your sublime self-sacrifice. I will make your future my charge. I will be your brother, will watch over you, and try to make you happy. Wait here, Bernice, while I go to find Flack and send him for the carriage. I will return and see you safely out and on your way with him."

Bernice again nodded assent, and he went out, leaving her alone in the bare, cold room, in the pale stream of moonlight.

He made his way down to the edge of the park, and readily found Flack, who was smoking a pipe in the shadow of the trees. Monk communicated the fact of his success, and sent his ally to the little inn at Chetwynd-by-sea for the required carriage. Having seen him depart, fully instructed, Monk stole back again

into the house. All was still now in rooms and corridors. He crept along the dim passages, and ascended the stairs to the attics. He entered the little room in which he had left Bernice.

She was not there ! He stood as if transfixed.

What had happened ? Had she been discovered ? Had she repented her self-sacrifice ?

His wild eyes detected the gleam of paper on the floor in the broad sheen of the moonlight. He bounded toward it and picked it up. It was a leaf from Bernice's note-book, and there was writing on it. He struck a fusee, and read the irregularly scrawled words. They had been written by Bernice, and were as follows :

“ GILBERT : I have given him up. I shall respect my oath not to reveal my identity ; but I cannot leave him yet. One more look at his dear face—to hear his voice again—to see him sleeping—surely I may be permitted these without fear of wronging any one. Do not search for me. I may go back to Mawr Castle in time—not now. My only thought now is that he is here and I must be near him, myself unseen.”

That was all. Monk sought for her through all the hours of that night. He listened at Chetwynd's door ; he was in an agony of unrest and foreboding, for his search was vain. He did not find her !



CHAPTER XIV.

REALITY UNDER THE SEEMING.

Upon the morning after the double appearance of the "Spectre" of Lady Chetwynd at Chetwynd Park, the family met at the breakfast-table at the usual hour, every member bearing evidence, in heavy eyes and pallid face of having passed a sleepless and anxious night. The young marquis had been so absorbed in thoughts of Bernice throughout the night as to have quite forgotten his second betrothal to Miss Monk.

But Sylvia, as may be supposed, had not forgotten it. There was a tenderness in her manner, a soft reliance upon him, a loving deference, that recalled to Lord Chetwynd the fact that she was his betrothed wife. His face, however, did not brighten at the remembrance, and the haggard look in his blue eyes even deepened. He was strangely silent throughout the meal, although Sylvia and Gilbert Monk, who came in late, were both seemingly gay, and free from anxiety and care.

After breakfast Miss Monk took Lord Chetwynd's arm with the air of one having a right to its support, and walked through the great hall to the winter morning-room.

"Oh, Roy," she said, "how happy I am! Your wife,

and mistress of Chetwynd Park? Life holds no joys that can compare with these. And, Roy, don't think me unmaidenly if I speak to you regarding our betrothal. As the poor dependent, my life is a burden to me. I think it would be but fair and just to me that our engagement should be proclaimed at once. My position will then be made clear, and I shall not feel compelled to seek other shelter."

Chetwynd winced a little. He would have preferred not to announce his engagement of marriage so soon after his return home, but he reluctantly acquiesced to Miss Monk's desire.

"I knew you would think as I do," said Sylvia, in a tone of satisfaction. "I presumed upon your consent to my wishes, and have already communicated the fact of our engagement to Mrs. Skewer and to Ragee. I shall write a note to Lady Welby to-day, informing her also, and she will spread the news throughout Sussex. Lady Welby will come to see me at once. And, Roy, when she asks me how soon we are to be married, what shall I say to her?"

Chetwynd started, and shrank from Sylvia perceptibly.

"I do not know—I had not thought," he said. "I leave the date of our marriage to you, Sylvia. Any date you may fix upon will be agreeable to me."

"Then let me say this day two months," said Miss Monk, vivaciously. "It is now March. We will be married in May, in the season of early flowers and good weather. We will have a grand breakfast here at the Park, and a garden party, a dinner and a ball, to celebrate our marriage. And we will then go to the Continent for the summer, dividing our time between Baden-Baden, Spa, Wiesbaden, Vichy and Trouville. I will do you credit, Roy. I shall be gay and charming,

and as sumptuously dressed as Eugenie in the height of her glory. Ah, that reminds me," and she clasped her jewelled hands more tightly on the marquis's arm, and regarded him with an affectation of shyness and embarrassment, "I would like to assume my new rank and position with suitable paraphernalia. Is not that a nice, long, suitable word?" and she forced a laugh. "I am already a pensioner upon your bounty, Roy—"

"Not so, Sylvia. Do not use an expression like that. You have been a dear sister to me, and have occupied an honored position in my household. You have been no pensioner or dependent. It is my wish also that you should have a suitable trousseau," and he sighed heavily. "I will give you a blank check to-day, and you can order your jewels, shawls, laces, and the rest, at your pleasure."

Sylvia fairly beamed upon him in her delight and gratitude. She flung her arms around his neck and kissed him. He returned the caress in a quiet, dispassionate manner, that at another time would have angered her. She talked to him gaily for a while, until the bailiff made his appearance, and then she glided away to her own room, triumphantly happy.

"Everything is going on splendidly, Ragee," she said, entering her dressing-room with a wild waltz. "Chetwynd consents to the immediate announcement of our engagement; and I have appointed this day two months for the marriage. He will give me a blank check to-day for my trousseau. He cannot retreat now. I am sure to be Lady Chetwynd. Quit brooding over that mystery of the ghost for an hour, and help me to make out my lists for orders and shopping. We have time enough to study the mystery afterwards."

Miss Monk sat down at her desk and wrote an affectionate little note to her friend, Lady Welby, announc-

ing her engagement of marriage to Lord Chetwynd. Her next letters were to milliners and dressmakers, ordering a magnificent trousseau. She also wrote to various business houses in London for samples of goods and garments to be sent to Chetwynd Park for her inspection, thus ordering jewels, shawls, rare laces, and a host of other feminine adornments.

She went down to luncheon, meeting the marquis, Gilbert Monk and Mr. Sanders, who had been invited to remain. It was evident that the bailiff had not been informed of the new relations existing between his employer and Sylvia. The young lady awaited only an opportunity to proclaim her good fortune, which soon occurred, and the bailiff hastened to offer his congratulations.

After the repast, Gilbert Monk withdrew apparently to his own room, and was seen no more until dinner. The intervening hours were actually spent by him in an examination of the disused portions of the grand old house in the hope of finding Bernice.

Night found him again disappointed.

Lord Chetwynd retired to his room that night with a sense of disappointment, half convinced that he had been indeed the victim of a freak of a disordered imagination. Yet he sat late before the fire in his bed-chamber, with his eyes fixed with intense expectancy upon the door of the bath-room, praying that the "illusion" might be repeated.

He prayed in vain. The fire burned low on his hearth. The silence of midnight lay like a spell upon the house, and yet his straining eyes failed to behold the vision they longed for. And at last, wearied and hopeless, he flung himself on his couch and dropped into a troubled sleep.

He had been slumbering more than an hour, and

his deepening breathing sounded through the hushed room, and the light burned low, and the embers were dying on the hearth, when the door of the dressing-room softly opened, and the "spectre" stole into the room. No instinct warned him that Bernice was near. The pulses of his heart stirred not as she stole through the dimness—like a ghost, indeed—to his side, and bent above him in an agony of love and tenderness. Her kisses fell like snow-flakes softly on his hair, his face, his hands, and he felt them not. He had been much awake on the previous night, and Nature was now taking her recompense.

"My darling! Oh, my darling!" was the mute cry that filled Bernice's heart. "The new love will never worship you as the old love did. Sylvia cannot understand you as Bernice did. Oh, it is hard to be thought dead, and yet to live—to know that regret for one is over, and that one is no longer missed. It is hard to see one's place filled—to know that another's caresses are dearest now, another's voice sweetest, another's love most prized. I should have died in my trance. Oh, God! why did I not die?"

She bowed her head, and her tears dropped like a silent rain upon the fair golden hair of her young husband. And he who loved her better than his life lay there sleeping heavily, hearing nothing, seeing nothing, knowing nothing of her nearness to him. Exhaustion fettered him as a drug might have done.

Bernice kissed his hands softly. She yearned over him. And yet she dared not betray to him her presence. Her oath restrained her.

A little while she lingered, until he stirred uneasily in his sleep, and then she silently flitted away, going into the dressing-room.

She had hidden in the attics all day. She was cold

and hungry, having eaten nothing since the previous day. She stood before the hearth in her dressing-room in an attitude of flight, harkening intently, and warming herself. There was a silver tray on the table, with a half bottle of wine and some biscuits, which had been brought up by the butler for Lord Chetwynd late in the evening, the butler having observed how little his lordship had eaten at table since his return home. The little attention to the marquis stood Bernice in good stead. She drank a portion of the wine and ate the biscuits as she grew warm and comfortable.

But she might not linger here. It was time to go.

She had worn a dark long cloak of waterproof cloth on her journey from Wales, and it was hidden in an upper room now. She had chosen to lay it aside during her night excursion, deeming it safer, if she were met, to be taken for a spectre. The cloak was not warm enough to protect her from the chill of the damp unused rooms which she made her haunt, and she stole now to one of the wardrobes and pulled out a lower drawer in which she had kept her shawls. The shawls were there now as she had left them. Her dresses hung in the press, and were folded on the shelves, just as Fifine had arranged them. She took out an Indian cashmere shawl which Chetwynd had bought for her in London, and wrapped its soft folds around her. Then she closed the drawer, and crept to the door and listened. Not a sound was to be heard without.

She opened the door and crept out into the hall, stealing along in the dimness like a swift shadow. She crossed the wide hall to place herself at greater distance from Chetwynd's rooms, and so unconsciously passed close to the doors of the suit occupied by Miss Monk.

She passed the dressing-room and bed-chamber of her

East Indian rival, her heart beating, it seemed to her, like a drum. As she came abreast the door of Miss Monk's bath-room, which had been ajar all the evening, it silently opened, and the witch-like figure of old Ragee crept out like a flash. Bernice caught a glimpse only of the dusky East Indian face, which resembled a face cut from a walnut more than anything else, a red turban, a pair of outstretched arms, and the gleam of sinister eyes, and then she flew before her strange pursuer, without a word of outcry.

The old woman sprang upon her like a panther, clutching her shawl. Bernice loosened her hold upon it and flitted away without it, like the white spectre she seemed. She hurried into the branching corridor in a panic, but the old woman did not pursue her. Ragee clutched the shawl tightly in her arms and hurried back into the bath-room. No one had been aroused. She went into Miss Monk's bed-chamber. Sylvia was sitting up in bed, anxious and expectant.

"Well?" said the young lady, impatiently. "You have watched all the evening, Ragee, depriving me of my sleep, and what good have you gained by it?"

"This!" cried old Ragee, dashing the shawl down upon the bed. "Do you know that shawl? I have just seen the spectre! It came out of the late Lady Chetwynd's dressing-room. It was dressed in white, only it wore this shawl to protect it from the cold. It crossed the hall. When it came alongside the bath-room I darted out and grasped the shawl, dragging it from its shoulders. The spectre was flesh and blood!—the shawl proves that. I saw its face; it was white with terror; it was changed and beautiful; but it was the face of Lady Chetwynd!—the face of the living marchioness! It is as I have believed. Gilbert Monk overheard our scheming, and outwitted us. The girl is

alive, I tell you ! Why she does not reveal herself to her husband I cannot imagine. She has but to speak to send you and me to prison. Our safety lies in prompt action. That pretended death must be made a reality !”

CHAPTER XV.

THE NEW CELEBRITY.

We have now to relate the experience of Mr. Tempest, the great explorer of China and Tartary, who had been the travelling companion of Lord Chetwynd upon the return to England from Genoa.

Mr. Tempest was devoted to science, and his explorations and discoveries had made a great sensation in the scientific world. He had sent home books to be published under the auspices of the Royal Geographical Society, and his name had become in England a household word.

Upon the morning after the departure of Lord Chetwynd for Sussex—the morning after Mr. Tempest had read in the newspaper of that disaster at sea in which Mr. and Mrs. Gwellan had perished—the great explorer exhumed his manuscripts, diaries and reports from his portmanteau, and made his way to the headquarters of the Royal Geographical Society.

He found himself received with flattering attentions. Members thronged around him to shake hands with him. Before he left the Society rooms he had received a dozen invitations to dinner from men of rank and learning. Tempest would have declined them all. His heart was sore with the recent wound inflicted by

the notice of "Bernice Gwellan's" death. He wanted to return quietly whence he had come, but so many "Fellows" of the R. G. S. combined to combat his resolves that he consented to remain a month in England at the least, and accepted an invitation to dine with a learned F. R. G. S.—one Sir Harry Fortescue—that very day, and an invitation for the morrow with a party of scientific gentlemen.

"You look harassed, Tempest," said Sir Harry Fortescue, as at last he walked out of the society rooms arm in arm with the great explorer, on their way to the baronet's club, into which Tempest had been persuaded to "drop" for an hour. "You think we shall run you to death, but when the ladies—the most indefatigable lion hunters in the world—come upon you, you will have to surrender at discretion. Have you been much in English society, my dear sir?"

"Not of late years," replied Mr. Tempest. "I don't like society, Sir Harry. My fifteen years, more or less, in Tartary, have not fitted me to grace a lady's boudoir. I should like to ask after a few whom I remember. As yet I have made no inquiries. Where is young Lord Grafton nowadays?"

"Dead. He died ten years since."

"Indeed!" said the explorer. "Can you tell me anything of the Right Honorable Mrs. William Molyneux, a great beauty and belle a dozen years ago?"

He asked the question with seeming carelessness and indifference, his face averted. He might have inquired, judging from his tone, after some chance acquaintance of former times. But his face had grown suddenly pale, his forehead was dewed with sweat, and his mouth quivered under his beard. He awaited the baronet's answer in a breathless suspense.

"I remember Mrs. Molyneux," said Sir Harry. "Who

does not? She was, as you say, a great beauty. She had some trouble with her husband, I believe. I never understood what the trouble was, but he deserted her. She went to one of the German baths for her health. She never recovered from the blow of her husband's desertion. She came home a wreck of her former self, and buried herself somewhere in the country. She lost her only child in its infancy, I have heard, and had few ties to bind her to life. Hers was a sad story. She died seven years ago—"

"Died?"

"Yes—of consumption, I think. Her death was in all the papers. Did you know her well?"

Mr. Tempest did not reply immediately, nor did he show his face to his companion, who would have been startled at its singular pallor, and at the strange expression of emotion that convulsed it.

"I met her often in society," the explorer said at last, as the silence grew marked and oppressive.

"Here we are at my club, Mr. Tempest," said Sir Harry. "I am anxious to introduce you to my friends. Perhaps you may really find some of your old acquaintances among them."

Tempest hesitated. His soul was profoundly stirred by the news he had just heard. He would have given much to be able to creep away to some friendly solitude just then, but he conquered his longing, and with an exercise of his almost superhuman self-control calmed his features and resumed his ordinary manner.

He accompanied Sir Harry into the club; men of note and rank were introduced to him, and he found his name and travels alike well known to Sir Harry's friends. He met no old acquaintances.

He dined that evening with Sir Harry Fortescue, as he had promised. His heart was in mourning for Ber-

nice, whom he believed to be dead, and also in mourning and torn by the pangs of self-reproach because of that Mrs. Molyneaux whose story had been so sad, and who had died so young.

“And yet what have I to reproach myself for?” he asked himself, with angry defiance. “I did rightly. And poor Marguerite is dead! ‘Died seven years ago.’ It is as well.”

A large party had been arranged to succeed the dinner. The ladies drove home to dress for the larger evening entertainment, Lady Fortescue retired to her private rooms, and Mr. Tempest adjourned with his host and a few kindred souls to the library, to spend the hours intervening between the two entertainments in congenial conversation.

As the hour grew late the drawing-rooms began to fill with gayly dressed people, and the host returned with his friends to the scene of brightness and splendor. Sir Harry, as in duty bound, placed himself in close attendance upon Lady Fortescue, assisting her in the reception of her guests.

Tempest was, as at the dinner, overwhelmed with attentions, which he continued to receive modestly and coolly. His wit gleamed like a polished sword blade, cutting now and then to the bone. He was cynical, cool, haughty, reserved, and, strangely enough, he was a social success.

Lady Fortescue made a tour of her grand rooms upon his arm, introducing him to various ladies with a pretty air of proprietorship, as if meaning to assert that the new lion was her own especial property.

“Do you know, Mr. Tempest,” said her ladyship, smiling, “that I am piqued at your cynicism and hatred of women, and I have vowed to myself that our great Tartar shall bow his haughty head to the yoke of an

English woman? No? You did not suspect my designs? Well, I have given you fair warning."

"And who may this conquering Englishwoman be?"

"She is Lady Diana Northwick. You see her by the window, surrounded by her adorers. She is an iceberg—a human iceberg—a coquette. But is she not beautiful? She is engaged to marry Lord Tentamour, who stands at her side, holding her bouquet. What do you think of her?"

Tempest glanced in the direction indicated to him, and beheld at a distant window, surrounded by a charmed circle of gentlemen, a woman rarely beautiful—so beautiful that one having once seen her face could never forget it.

She was tall, regal, and statuesque, with a noble and queenly carriage of her stately figure. Her pure Greek face was superb in its royal haughtiness. The red lips were curled in a smile that was strangely fascinating and winning. She was a blonde of the purest type, with a complexion like the fairest pearl. Her hair was of a pale golden tint, yellow, without a glint of red in its luxuriant masses. It was arranged in crêpes, and puffs, and rolls, and curls, after the fashion of the day, but its fanciful disorder could not conceal the shape of her small, noble head, which was poised proudly upon her slender neck. She looked an empress, in her robe of pale blue velvet, with trimmings of point-lace, and ornaments of diamonds.

"She is very beautiful," said Tempest, slowly. "I can imagine a man falling in love with her, but you say she is a coquette? There is a disdain in her haughty glance, as she looks around her at this moment. Is that a revelation of her inner nature? Is she really above all these coquetries?"

"The question shows that she has already cast her

glamour over you," said Lady Fortescue banteringly. "That is always the way. It is fortunate that you have no tie to bind you to another. Think if you should fall in love with Lady Di while you were the husband of some other woman? Such a thing would not be unknown here in London. Ah, I fancy you wince, Mr. Tempest. Can it be that there is a Mrs. Tempest in the background all the while?"

"No; I should say that could not be," said the explorer, calmly. "All the ties that once fettered me are broken. But I am no silly moth to flutter around the flame of Lady Di's beauty. I candidly think that she is one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen—perhaps the most beautiful; but hers is the beauty of the glorious marble statue, not the beauty of a tender woman. Do men call her heartless?"

"Yes, and rave about her, and go mad about her beauty. She enjoys her power, and that is why she has held her lover, Lord Tentamour, so long at arm's length. They will be married soon, I hear."

"Who is Lady Northwick?" asked Tempest.

"She is the widow of Sir Basil Northwick, a rich baronet, who was sufficiently accommodating to die and leave her all his wealth. She must be nearly thirty years old. Did you not tell me that you do not care for women? Yet see how long we have been talking about the most brilliant coquette in London. Having excited your curiosity in regard to her, permit me to introduce you to her."

"Thanks," said Tempest, bowing assent. "I dare say you are tired of me, Lady Fortescue, and are willing to be rid of me."

They advanced toward the reigning belle, who welcomed the lion of the evening with a dazzling smile. Lady Fortescue presented the great explorer, and then

moved away. At the distance of a few paces she paused to speak to a guest, and her glances reverted to Lady Diana and Tempest. The Tartar traveller was already deep in conversation with the polished coquette.

"Lady Di is sure to add Mr. Tempest to her list of lovers," thought Mrs. Fortescue, with a thrill of dismay. "He does not understand a woman's wiles. She would like to win the homage of the new celebrity. I fancy he is a widower. There was a strange expression in his eyes when I spoke of a possible Mrs. Tempest. I could fancy him newly bereaved when I remember that look. I am persuaded that something startling will grow out of this meeting of Lady Di and Tempest. He will fall in love with her and he will not go back to Tartary next month. But what will be the end?"

CHAPTER XVI.

LADY DIANA NORTHWICK.

Lady Diana Northwick, celebrated for her beauty and scintillant wit, was a most accomplished coquette and woman of society; and Lady Fortescue might well feel apprehensive lest the great explorer, so long unused to ladies' society, should fall a victim to her alluring beauty.

But the distinguished explorer seemed by no means ready to fall upon his knees a captive to the charms of Lady Diana. He regarded her with a cool cynicism that piqued her, and yet his manner was full of a gentle courtesy that showed that he had not always been a stranger to a lady's drawing-room.

Lady Diana was greatly impressed with his appearance. It would be something, she thought, with the instincts of the coquette all aroused by his cool cynicism, to bring a man like this to her feet.

"I would like to subdue his pride," thought the beautiful coquette. "I can do it, and I will! By the by, I wonder if there's a Mrs. Tempest? My success will hinge upon that."

She soon had an opportunity to satisfy her curiosity. As she was slowly promenading with Tempest, he made a remark about having no friends or relatives in England.

"Pardon me," said Lady Diana, "but you excite my curiosity. Have you no family ties, Mr. Tempest?"

"None whatever, Lady Diana."

Lady Diana looked surprised, but in her heart she was pleased. Her project of subduing this haughty, cynical celebrity was not likely to be interfered with by a possible Mrs. Tempest.

Tempest's wit was as brilliant as her own, and they became absorbed in conversation, which they kept up until the little fernery where they had paused became filled with groups of lovers, and they then returned to the drawing-room.

They presently became separated, and did not meet again throughout the evening until Lady Diana came down from the dressing-room, shrouded in white opera cloak and hood, when Tempest stepped forward with grave courtesy and offered her his arm to conduct her to her carriage. Lord Tentamour sprang forward just an instant too late. Lady Diana laid her little gloved hand on Tempest's arm, and walked beside him out at the open doorway, down the carpeted stone steps under the gay awning, and was assisted by the returned traveller into her carriage.

She bestowed upon him a bewitching smile, and asked him to call upon her at her house in Park lane, saying that she should always be at home to him. Tempest accepted the invitation gravely, and bowing deeply, stepped back, giving place to Lord Tentamour, who, with a displeased air, entered the carriage, and as it rolled away, Tempest ascended the steps and re-entered the house, grimly smiling.

The day after Lady Fortescue's party Lady Diana Northwick stood at one of the broad plate-glass French windows of her own drawing-room, in her stately house at South Audley street, looking out idly, yet with an expectancy unknown to herself.

Before the bright hearth stood her lover, to whom she was said to be betrothed—Lord Tentamour. He was evidently irritated and annoyed. One might have deemed that the noble pair had been quarreling, but for the quiet impassiveness of the lady's cold and haughty face and the expression of weariness in her magnificent azure eyes.

"I begin to believe that people are right, Diana, and that you have no heart," said Lord Tentamour, bitterly. "You have played fast and loose with me for years; you have always held me at arms' length, and treated me more as an ordinary friend than as your accepted lover and promised husband. I am tired of all this."

"If you are 'tired of all this,'" said Lady Diana, coldly, "you can fling off my shackles. I will give you back your liberty. On the whole, perhaps that course might be best."

"I refuse to accept it!" cried Lord Tentamour, the angry flush deepening on his face. "Diana, you are cruel. I believe, as people say, that you were born without a heart. I have been your betrothed husband for more years than I like to count. You are not treat-

ing me well. I demand that our long engagement terminate at once in marriage. I shall give you no further grace. You shall marry me within a month."

Lady Diana's pure pale cheeks kindled into flame.

"Lord Tentamour forgets to whom he is speaking," she said, icily. "I suggest that your lordship seek a bride in Turkey. I believe, outside of Turkey, a lady is allowed some voice in respect to her own marriage. Your now *rôle* of Grand Turk does not become you. I do not intend to be married in a month's time. If you so intend, you must seek another bride than I."

"You are very fond of your liberty," said his lordship, with a slight, almost imperceptible sneer. "And what use do you make of it? You are a coquette, whose only object in life is to play the part of a false beacon, and lure men to their ruin. Can you truthfully affirm that you did not play the coquette last night with this new lion—this Tartar explorer—Basil Tempest?"

The flame on Lady Diana's cheeks burned yet more vividly.

"I have not appointed you my father confessor, Lord Tentamour," she said, looking more intently from the window. "I was civil to this stern, dark-browed traveller, scarcely more."

"You call it bare civility to devote to him a full hour out of your evening—to question him in regard to his adventures—to appear awed and thrilled and delighted by turns, and to exhibit an interest in him you rarely exhibit toward even me?" said Lord Tentamour, with jealous vehemence. "I see that you are interested in him. I insist, Diana, that a stop be put to your coquetries. I demand again that your engagement to me be fulfilled immediately. I will not wait for you longer. Great Heaven! Look at the years I have

wasted in dancing attendance upon you. My suspense must cease to-day. You must name our bridal day."

In his jealous passion, his lordship assumed a dictatorial air that aroused Lady Diana's defiant anger. She turned away from the window and approached him, her blue eyes blazing, her lips curled in scorn and aversion. She pulled from one slender forefinger a ring set with an immense diamond, and dropped it into Tentamour's hands in haughty silence.

"Diana! What does this mean?"

"It means that you are free—and that I am also free! It means that you have no longer right to vent your jealous rages upon me. I am tired of these scenes. I have deferred our marriage from year to year for reasons which you know as well as I. Our engagement is terminated at last. I advise you to woo and win some one more meek and submissive than I."

"And you mean that it is all over between us?"

"All over, my lord. We cease to be lovers, but we may, if you choose, be friends."

His lordship laughed bitterly and sneeringly, and turned the precious gem over and over in his hands. He was on the point of bursting forth into fierce reproaches, when a resounding knock was heard on the house door. A moment later, the tall, becalved footman ushered into the drawing-room the great Tartar explorer, Basil Tempest.

Lord Tentamour thrust the betrothal ring in his pocket and determined doggedly to give the new-comer no advantage, but to outstay him and renew the broken engagement. He would not give up his beautiful betrothed, and he had sufficient confidence in himself to believe that he could win her back.

Mr. Tempest came in, grave and courteous, his dark, stern face wearing its usual commanding expression,

and his cool, keen eyes taking in the discomfort of Tentamour's situation at a glance. He was conscious, even before a word had been spoken, that Lady Diana and Tentamour had quarrelled, but he gave no sign in his manner of his discovery.

Lady Di greeted him with a smile that stung Tentamour as a covert insult to himself.

"I am delighted to see you, Mr. Tempest," said the lady, with charming courtesy, giving her hand to the explorer. "It is pleasant to find that among so many claimants upon your attention, you have not forgotten me."

Tempest made a pleasant response, and then exchanged greetings with Lord Tentamour. The two gentlemen did not shake hands, but they exchanged glances of dislike, and were from that moment enemies.

Lady Diana won the explorer to speak of himself and his adventures, which he did with modest ease and grace. Lord Tentamour listened with a perceptible sneer.

"Do you know," said Lady Diana, reflectively, "I admire excessively all this daring, this disregard of luxuries and comforts, this devotion to science; but I fear I have not in me the stuff of which explorers are made. After one of those long ten-hour rides which you describe, through a drizzling rain, I should long for a warm fireside, and refuse to be comforted with a bed on the hard ground. And, although I am not very fond of my kind, I still should prefer to see now and then an English countenance instead of those round Mongolian faces."

"I never experienced a desire to see an English face," remarked Tempest. "In truth, I was not likely to meet many of them in northern China or thereabouts. The British traveller, as a rule, clings to the

well-beaten routes. I have been away from England for a score of years, more or less, and in all that time I scarcely met with one of my countrymen. I avoided them on my return to England, being something of a misanthrope, but in my very avoidance of them I fell in with one upon a steamer in which I sailed from Genoa to Marseilles, and I felt drawn to him as if he had been my own son. He was a noble young fellow, as fair as a girl naturally, but his face was bronzed by Eastern suns. His eyes were blue—as blue as your own, Lady Diana. He looked delicate, yet I do not doubt his slender frame was as strong as steel. He had the soul of a lion in his light and supple frame. He was a marquis, although so young. His name was Lord Chetwynd. Do you know him?"

"I knew his mother," said Lady Diana. "Lady Chetwynd married a swarthy Indian colonel, who was poor, and had two children by a wife he married and who died in India. They say the first Mrs. Monk was a half-caste, and I think the story may be true, for Miss Monk is swarthy and has an East Indian look. Lady Chetwynd became Lady Barbara Monk—'all for love,' as the song says. The colonel must have fascinated her, as snakes fascinate birds. He was not a winning sort of man. This young Lord Chetwynd made a romantic marriage, and his wife died soon afterward. The marriage was a *mésalliance*. He was engaged to Miss Monk; and, by the way, they are now re-engaged and will soon be married. They had a lovers' quarrel, and he went away in his yacht to Norway and the Hebridean group of islands, and in a fit of pique at Miss Monk married a plain little island girl, who had been adopted by the island pastor, and educated as a lady. There was not a gentleman's family on the island except the minister's. And Lord Chetwynd brought

that child—she was only sixteen or seventeen—to reign as mistress of Chetwynd Park. It was a second edition of Lord and Lady Burleigh. The grandeurs of her new position overwhelmed the young island girl, and she died some two months after her advent in England. Lady Chetwynd, with all her shortcomings, was a wonderful young creature, the more to be admired when one reflects that the island of St. Kilda is a mere rock, inhabited by a rude and ignorant peasantry.

Mr. Tempest's face grew suddenly white.

"What island did you say, Lady Diana?" he asked, eagerly.

"St. Kilda; a bit of rock some two miles by three, with mountain peaks and a village on the little bay. The island is not well known."

"The story interests me strangely," said Mr. Tempest, in a voice that had suddenly grown husky. "Such romantic marriages are rare; and, besides, Lord Chetwynd is my friend. He has asked me down to Chetwynd Park. It is odd that he should have married a fisher girl. What was her name?"

"Bernice Gwellan. Odd, is it not?"

Mr. Tempest averted his face and did not answer. It required all his stern and powerful will to command his emotions at that moment. For, as the reader knows, it was he who had conveyed the baby Bernice to the island of St. Kilda fifteen years before, and confided her to the care of the Gwellans. It was for the sake of Bernice that he had returned, although so tardily, from his Eastern explorations. Bernice was his own and only child, and only since he had heard of her death had he known how he loved her. And now he learned that she had not died on the island—that she had loved and been loved—had been wooed and mar-

ried—had been in England, and was buried but a brief journey from London.

The discovery held him speechless, but Lord Tentamour filled up the silence with some remark, and Tempest's agitation was unnoticed.

Tempest conquered his emotion as the lion-tamer conquers his beasts in the cage. He commanded himself with a will that seemed of iron. And although his face was pale, and his black eyes strangely sombre, yet his tone was careless as he said, in his usual voice :

"The story is very entertaining. Its beauty is spoiled by the fact of Lord Chetwynd's expected second marriage. But perhaps that is well. He is young, and Miss Monk was, you say, his first love. I will take a run down to Chetwynd Park after a few days, and see my fellow-traveller."

"Shall you go back to Tartary in a month, Mr. Tempest?" asked Lady Diana. "If you answer in the affirmative, I shall think London has lost all its attractions."

"I may stay longer than I at first intended," replied the explorer. "My plans are not yet settled. I begin to fear," and he directed an admiring look toward her ladyship, "that London—or South Audley street—has too many attractions for me, and will hold me here when I should be gone."

Lord Tentamour looked displeased.

"Lady Diana and I were speaking of you before you came in, Mr. Tempest," said his lordship, stiffly, "and in admiring your exploits came naturally to speak of your family. Are you of the Durham Tempests?"

"I am a connection of that family," said the explorer, coolly.

Lord Tentamour, having expected a negative, was silenced.

Tempest prolonged his call to the limits of propriety, and then arose to take leave. Other guests arriving at the moment, nothing remained for Lord Tentamour but to depart with his rival. Lady Diana invited the explorer to call again, and Tempest noticed that her betrothal ring, which he had observed on the previous night, was absent from her finger. This fact, added to Tentamour's silence and suppressed anger, convinced him that the engagement between the noble pair had been broken that very day. He laid up the fact for future use, and bade her good-morning with an *impressement* that seemed to indicate an extreme admiration for her.

The rivals—for Lord Tentamour saw in Tempest an actual rival—emerged from the house together. At the foot of the steps they halted on the pavement. Tempest raised his hat in adieu, but Lord Tentamour detained him.

"How long are you likely to be in England, sir?" inquired his lordship.

"It is impossible to say, my lord. I intended to return to China within a month. As I feel now, I may never go back."

"You have come to this decision since you entered Lady Diana Northwick's house this afternoon; is it not so?"

"Your astuteness does you credit, my lord. It is so."

Lord Tentamour's face deepened in its sullen flush of rage.

"Am I to understand that you are one of Lady Diana's numerous victims?" he sneered. "Are you, like so many others, striving to win the rich young widow?"

"The lists are open to all," said Tempest, quietly. "I conclude that no engagement of marriage exists between you and Lady Diana, since I saw no betrothal ring to-

day upon her finger. And if she is not bound by any ties I shall seek to win her. I am frank with you. I admire Lady Diana. I place myself as your rival. If I can win her I will marry her. Let her choose between us, my lord. If she prefers you it will be all right, and I'll go back to Tartary. If she loves me I shall regard myself as a fortunate man, and shall marry her before the summer is over. A clear field is all I ask."

"You are cool," said Tentamour, with a scowl. "The lady is my promised wife. I forbid your attentions to her."

"No one can forbid them but the lady herself. If she asserts that they are unwelcome, or that she prefers to marry you, I will retire as gracefully as may be. But the fact stands, my lord. You and I are rivals, and I shall marry Lady Diana Northwick if I can."

He bowed courteously to the enraged lord and passed on.

CHAPTER XVII.

RAGEE AND HER VICTIM.

The bustle of a great preparation pervaded Chetwynd Park. The announcement of Lord Chetwynd's betrothal to Sylvia Monk had been publicly made, and had appeared in the Eastbourne local newspapers, and in the London fashionable journals. The marriage was to take place the third week in June, and it was now the first week in April.

Miss Monk had an insatiate and ungovernable love of luxury. She drew liberally upon Lord Chetwynd's purse. She intended that her bridal outfit should rival

that of the Princess Louise. Despite her indolent nature, she never tired of trying on new garments, jewels and shawls, and her mornings were all spent in her dressing-room among her dressmakers and her fineries. She tried to feel secure in her good fortune. Her betrothal had been made public, and what could happen to again break off her marriage?

Ah! what? She knew that Bernice Chetwynd lived, and the fear was never absent from her guilty soul lest Bernice should reveal herself to Chetwynd, and claim her old place in his heart and home. By day and by night a haunting dread possessed her.

This was telling on her. How was she to endure it for three months? Why did not Bernice come forward? Why did she hide herself, no one knew where, like a guilty person? Sylvia tormented herself with these questions, but could not answer them.

Gilbert Monk stayed on at the Park, secretly searching for Bernice, and was inexpressibly anxious and troubled.

If Sylvia and Gilbert Monk were fully occupied, Lord Chetwynd was not less so. His occupation was of the most practical description. He was busy with the memorial school which was to perpetuate the name of Bernice. He interested himself in this project as he had interested himself in nothing since he had lost his young wife. He thought of her continually. His project seemed to bring him nearer to her.

One evening, after dinner, Lord Chetwynd walked over to the bailiff's villa, intent upon some new amplification of his favorite idea of the school, and old Ragee stalked silently afar off in the shadows, and watched, in fear and trembling, to see if Bernice would not appear.

Chetwynd spent the evening in his bailiff's office,

discussing business. It was after ten o'clock when he took his leave and set out upon his return home by a private path traversing the park.

The moon had risen in mellow glory, and its soft light lay in broad streams upon the wide avenues. In the narrower paths the light flickered down in tremulous showers through the rifts in the trees. The stars were glowing softly in the blue azure of the heavens. Such a night as this Lord Chetwynd had known in St. Kilda. Here, as there, the waves beat in the distance on the rocks like pulses, and Chetwynd could almost fancy that Bernice was with him.

"How this night brings her back to me!" he thought in his anguish of desolation. "Oh, to see her as I saw her upon the first evening of my return home from my wanderings! Oh, Bernice! Bernice! Whether it be an illusion of my senses or a veritable apparition, come back to me once more! Only once more let me behold the sweet vision of my lost young wife!"

Was the longing intense enough to bring its own fulfillment?

In the broad sheen of the moonlight, a few yards in advance of him, at a point where a wide avenue crossed the narrow path which Lord Chetwynd was treading, he saw a slender figure in white, her face turned to him, her arms outstretched toward him.

He halted spell-bound.

She seemed a vision too ethereal for humanity. He believed then, as he had not believed before, in spite of his lack of superstition and his contempt for stories of the supernatural, that he was looking upon a disembodied spirit! He believed that he beheld Bernice, but Bernice freed from all mortal encumbrance, as she had come back to him from her home in heaven. He did not reason—he only felt.

She was dressed in the white silk robe in which he had consigned her to the tomb. It trailed after her on the ground. Her neck was bare, the lace frills of her Pompadour corsage rising around it like foam. Her long dusky hair trailed over her shoulders like a cloud. He could even see every feature of her radiant beauty in the soft sheen of the moonlight. Her face had a mournful, yearning look that went to his soul.

He dared not advance, lest she should fade from his sight. And so he stood entranced, scarcely daring to breathe, devouring her with his eyes.

The rencontre, so dramatic and sensational, had not been planned by Bernice. She was as much surprised as Chetwynd, and she was also spell-bound.

She had spent all these days since her last appearance to him in a lonely garret above the very attics in the unused tower of the great house of Chetwynd Park. In this secluded and hidden retreat, of which Monk never even thought, Bernice lived her strange, desolate, mournful existence. She had carried up to her retreat a store of blankets, which she had managed to secure from the rooms below. She had also brought with her from Mawr Castle changes of garments, enough for all her needs. In her dingy garret she wore her gray travelling robes and a long waterproof cloak, preserving her white silk gown unsoiled. She brought hither also stores of food from the pantry, larder and store-room, and had procured several bottles of wine from the butler's pantry in the night.

Her object in thus remaining on at the Park she did not know herself. She only felt that she could not go. She was bound by an oath, which she was too religious not to hold sacred, not to reveal the fact that she lived to her husband, except with Gilbert Monk's consent. He had refused that consent ; and, indeed, she would

not now have asked for it. She had no wish to return from the grave unwelcomed. She believed that all mourning for her was past, that her place was filled, and that she was forgotten. She would not return to claim a place in which another had been installed. She only wished that she had died.

She had borne the closeness and dinginess of her garret until a longing had come over her to inhale again the fresh air, and to walk in the park. She was weak from want of exercise, and on this night had robed herself in her white burial robe, as a matter of precaution against detection, and had thrown about her her black cloak, and had stolen out into the park unseen by any of the inmates of the house. Arrived in the park, and finding the air mild, she had flung aside her cloak, and was carrying it on her arm.

If Chetwynd's sensation at beholding her was one of rapture, hers was one of terror. She trembled in her fear of discovery.

They regarded each other for some moments in a strange silence. Chetwynd's breath came heavily and pantingly. His eyes were wild and starting. Suddenly, without a word or cry, he leaped forward and ran toward her headlong.

Bernice retreated before him in instinctive flight.

He pursued. She could almost hear his frenzied breathing. He came on with a swift rush, as if he meant to seize her whether she were human or spirit.

She turned into the wide avenue and fled like a deer. She would not be taken. Turning into an obscure path near at hand, she caught up her dress and flung around her her black cloak. Then she halted behind a tree, concealing herself.

Chetwynd went by along the path swiftly in a blind

pursuit. He had lost sight of the glorious vision, but he prayed to see it again—only once again.

Bernice listened until the sound of his tread had died away in the distance. She was panting and frightened, wild-eyed and trembling. She crept forth from her concealment and entered the path again. She did not glance behind her, else she would have seen the tall, shadowy figure of the old East Indian woman stalking silently in the dark border of the path. But Ragee saw her and knew her. And suddenly, as Bernice stole along the lonely path—Chetwynd far beyond hearing—the old woman launched herself forward in a swift panther spring, and hurled herself upon Bernice, bearing her to the earth in the violence of her onslaught.

“I’ve got you at last, have I?” hissed the witch-like old woman, holding the girl in her iron grip. “And now, if you please, we’ll come to a settlement.”

The suddenness of the old East Indian woman’s attack upon her for an instant paralyzed the young Marchioness of Chetwynd, but she did not faint nor shriek. The moment her brief stupefaction began to clear away, she turned upon her assailant, fighting like a little tigress. She was in a panic of mortal terror, and she struck out blindly, with all the energy of an utter desperation.

She speedily discovered that she was but as a child in the iron grasp of her assailant. Ragee’s muscles were of steel. A desperate fury animated the Hindoo woman. She had the advantage, also, not having relaxed her first hold on Bernice, and the girl, panting and breathless, wild-eyed and trembling, stood still at last, and looked over her shoulder at her enemy with a wild and horrified gaze.

“Who is it?” she whispered, panting.

"It is I—old Ragee," hissed the Hindoo woman in the girl's ears.

The expression in Bernice's eyes deepened into amazement and terror. She made another vain effort to free herself. Then she whispered :

"What do you want of me? What is the meaning of this assault?"

"Perhaps you think I don't know you," said the Hindoo woman, tauntingly. "It was I who dragged the shawl from your shoulders that night in the great house. I know you," and her tones grew fierce and hateful. "I know you, my lady. You were supposed to have died; you lay in state in your burial robes for six days; you were buried in the Chetwynd vault. And yet here you are alive! It is you and none other! It is you, and not a ghost. It is you in the flesh, alive, strong, well. How happens this, that you live who have been mourned as dead?"

The fierce vindictive voice failed to kindle a spark of anger in Bernice's breast. Her heart throbbed with a keen pain. She was bewildered, dizzy, and still trembling. She did not answer.

"Speak!" cried the Hindoo woman, shaking her. "Do you deny that you are the Marchioness of Chetwynd?"

Bernice's oath prevented her declaring her identity. Not even to old Ragee could she confess herself the Marchioness of Chetwynd.

"Speak!" reiterated the old woman. "Speak, or I will drag you up to the great house, and into my lord's presence."

"No, no!" cried Bernice. "I will not go there! What do you want of me?"

"You acknowledge that you are Lady Chetwynd?"

"No, I cannot acknowledge that."

"It isn't necessary. I know you. Who rescued you from your coffin? Was it Gilbert Monk? What was the matter with you in your illness? How came he to rescue you?"

"Why do you ask me all these questions?" asked Bernice. "I cannot answer them. Let me go. Let me go, I say."

"By no means. I haven't begun to speak to you yet. We are likely to be interrupted here," said Ragee. "Come with me. Do not hang back. I shall not hurt you."

She grasped Bernice's arm yet more tightly, and hurried her forward with swift impatience. They plunged into portions of the park which Bernice had never visited. And at last they came out upon the border of a lovely little lake, formerly much used in winter by the Chetwynds and their guests as a skating pond.

The lake was lower than the surface of the park, and was inclosed by high banks, which were covered with stately trees. The borders of the lake were in shadow, but its centre lay in the full sheen of the moonlight, and looked like some great pellucid pearl.

There was upon one bank of the lake a small, overhanging chalet of the Swiss order of architecture, which had been built for the use of skaters in winter. Its lower story opened directly upon the lake, and was warmed in time of use by a little German porcelain stove. Its upper story, reached upon the landward side by a flight of stairs, was provided with a great wide balcony across its entire front, where spectators had been wont to sit to view the skaters.

The upper room of the chalet was completely furnished, and was usually kept locked. Old Ragee had lately supplied herself with keys to the building, with a view to her present use of it.

She half led, half dragged her victim up the long, airy flight of outside stairs to the upper balcony of the chalet. The roof was wide and protecting, and the balcony lay in deep shadow. The Hindoo hurried Bernice along in the gloom to the door that gave upon the upper room, and there halted. There were rustic chairs and sofas in profusion upon the wide balcony. Ragee seated her captive upon a sofa and sat down beside her, keeping a close hold upon her.

They were upon the water side of the building, and the entire structure concealed them from view from the direction whence they had come. The lake lay before them, and was under their very balcony, and beyond were the dark and wooded shores also belonging to the park. Ragee shot a keen glance into those distant shadows, and then, convinced that in the deep shade of the overhanging roof she could not be seen even from the lake, she turned again to her young captive.

"We are here alone," she said, in a voice that thrilled Bernice with a strange terror. "Alone, my lady! Do you comprehend?"

"Yes," faltered Bernice. "We are alone."

"Are you afraid?"

"No. Why should I be? But it is all so strange. Let me go, Ragee. Oh, let me go!"

"There, you have confessed, in the utterance of my name, that you are Lady Chetwynd. Now I ask you again, and I ask it for the last time, what was the matter of you in your illness?"

She struck a taper, which she drew from a box in her pocket, and held the light to the girl's face. The face was very pale from emotion and weariness, but there was a brave and dauntless light upon it that emanated from a brave and dauntless soul. And though Bernice, as before, refused to answer the question, the old

Hindoo woman searched her features in vain for any knowledge of the wicked attempts upon her ladyship's life. It was evident that Monk had not betrayed to her his sister's guilt.

Ragee drew a breath of relief.

"If you were to ask me these questions all night," said Bernice, "I still could not answer you. You are but wasting time on me."

Something of the truth began to dawn on the mind of the astute East Indian woman. She began to perceive that Bernice was fettered by some promise given to Gilbert Monk. Evidently he was keeping the girl secluded for a purpose. Did he mean treachery to his sister?

"I suppose," Ragee said, roughly, "that you are bound by some oath, my lady. What are you doing at Chetwynd Park playing ghost? You have changed, grown beautiful, too, I suppose; but what will your beauty avail you? Perhaps you think to win back your former husband? You might as well try to win back your lost babyhood."

The light of the taper flickered and went out, and the two were again in the shadow. The Hindoo woman could not see how her words affected her hearer, and went on harshly:

"Lord Chetwynd is greatly annoyed at the appearance of your supposed apparition. He threatens to leave the Park if he is further haunted. And it is natural that it should be so," continued the old Hindoo woman, with a fierce intonation. "When people die, they should stay dead. The most violent grief will wear away, and the mourners fill the dead one's place with a new love, and the return of the dead to life would prove most awkward and embarrassing. I'm sorry for you, my lady, but for the sake of others, I must tell you the truth. Lord Chetwynd don't want

you back. He is happy with his first love, and she adores him. You will come back to a home where you have long since ceased to be missed, and where you are not wanted. Your return to life and home will create more misery than your supposed death."

Every word of this speech pierced to Bernice's very soul, yet she did not cry nor moan. The words were but a repetition of those with which Gilbert Monk had so cruelly stabbed her. It was as he had said—her place was filled and she was forgotten.

The girl arose—Ragee loosening her grip upon her—and walked unsteadily to the low railing of the balcony and leaned upon it. She was too weak to attempt an escape.

The old woman watched her some moments with a singular gleam in her eyes, and a look of hatred so intense that it was odd the girl could not feel it. Then Ragee arose silently and crept across the balcony toward the girl till she arrived within some three or four feet of her. And then, with a bound of a wild beast, and an inarticulate cry on her lips, she hurled herself forward upon the slender girl, caught her up in her arms, and flung her over the balcony into the waters of the lake.

Bernice's scream and her splash in the cold waters were simultaneous.

Old Ragee leaned upon the balcony, and looked over in the darkness. She was not prepared for the sight that met her eyes. Bernice was striking out with one arm feebly, but with the skill of a swimmer, for a distant point of the shore. The girl's instincts warned her to avoid the banks adjacent to the chalet, where her enemy would be likely to prevent her landing.

The old woman muttered a curse in her native tongue.

"She can swim like a fish," she muttered. "I had

forgotten that she was taught to row and swim and sail a boat at St. Kilda. She strikes out for the deeper water. She means to land at that jungle-like point yonder. What courage ! What coolness ! She'll outwit me yet. Ah ! she begins to flag. She uses but one arm in swimming. Why is that ? She must have struck the other on that pile of stones just under the surface of the water. Perhaps her arm is broken. She stops. She is hurt, or chilled, or has a cramp ?”

She was right. Bernice had ceased to exert herself. She floated on the water as if helpless, and then threw up one arm wildly. The next moment, with a wild scream, she sank slowly in the dark waters, which closed above her.

“She is drowned !” muttered the Hindoo woman, with a jubilant laugh. “I'll come to look for her body in the morning, and every day until I find it. I will then tie stones to it and sink it. No one must ever know that she came back to life. I rather think, Mr. Gilbert Monk, that I have frustrated your schemes. The ghost of Chetwynd Park is laid, and my missy will be Lady Chetwynd, with no one to molest her. We'll see how my lady will rise from her grave the second time.”

With a horrible laugh on her shrivelled lips, the old Hindoo woman flitted down the steps of the balcony and plunged into the shadows of the park, taking a homeward direction, and leaving Bernice to her fate !



CHAPTER XVIII.

DEPARTURE NECESSARY.

We will now return to Lord Chetwynd, whom we left flying through Chetwynd Park in pursuit of the supposed spectre of his lost young bride.

When Bernice had turned aside into a yet more obscure path, the young marquis dashed on in the wider avenue, unconscious that she had changed her course, and soon left her far behind, as we have narrated. His progress was toward the great house; and when at length he slackened his speed, with the conviction that the apparition had indeed vanished, he was on the edge of the park, upon the very border of the wooded lawn.

He halted a moment in indecision and bewilderment.

And just then Gilbert Monk came across the lawn with a swift stride, and approached him. Lord Chetwynd, in his excitement and agitation, shrank back into the shadow, not caring to be seen; but Monk had caught a glimpse of the outlines of his dark figure, and called to him softly, and in a suppressed voice:

“Hallo, there! Is it you, Flack? I’ve tracked my game into the park. We must look lively— Ah!—the devil! Is it you, my lord?”

His swift stride had brought him close to the marquis. He recoiled in horror as he recognized his lordship, and grew deadly pale lest he had betrayed himself.

But the marquis had scarcely heard Monk's singular address, and had certainly given no heed to it. He was absorbed in his own bewildering experience, and had no thought save for that.

"Have you seen anything—anybody—coming this way, Monk?" asked his lordship, agitatedly.

"Not a soul, my lord," answered Monk, eagerly. "Are you looking for some one?"

"Yes—no. It must have been my imagination—no, I swear it was not that. I cannot explain or understand it, but I saw her again but now, Gilbert, in the park!"

"*Her*—Bernice? Impossible, my lord. You must have seen one of the housemaids coming from a tryst—"

"What! Do I not know every feature of the face that has lain so often in my bosom?—the face that is graven on my very soul? I tell you I saw her, Monk. She flitted on before me and vanished into the shadows."

"Where did you see the fancied spectre?"

"In the Little Beech Walk, just out of the Beech Avenue."

"I'll take a turn in that direction just to satisfy you, Chetwynd, that the appearance was that of a housemaid, or else a hallucination. You should get into the house immediately and sit by the fire, Chetwynd. Let Sylvia dose you a little. I am persuaded that you are not well."

Without waiting for a response, Gilbert Monk turned away abruptly and hurried to the Little Beech Walk

and to its junction with the Beech Avenue—two well-known points in the extensive and well-kept park. He followed the Walk to its junction with the narrower and obscure path into which Bernice had turned. He paused here, with a conviction that Bernice had plunged into this path. So strong was his conviction that he struck a fusee and by its light examined narrowly the shadowed path into which but few beams of moonlight penetrated.

His keen eyes speedily discovered traces of the struggle between the old Hindoo woman and Bernice.

“I see,” he muttered. “She has been here—and so has some one else. There are marks of a struggle. Flack must have seen and captured her. That’s it. She is in Flack’s hands. But where has he taken her? He would naturally carry her to the most secluded spot within a reasonable distance. He has probably taken her to the skaters’ chalet by the Wide Waters. He has keys to the chalet, which I procured for him. Yes, he has gone there.”

Without an instant’s further delay he flung his burned-out fusee upon the ground, and struck out through the park by a short cut toward the skaters’ chalet.

As he neared his destination, a wild scream—that uttered by Bernice as she fell into the lake from the balcony of the chalet, when hurled over the parapet by the old Hindoo woman—smote his hearing.

He quickened his speed into a run, muttering :

“Curse that dolt ! Why does he let her yell like that? Does he mean to let her arouse the county? Chetwynd may be behind me, for aught I know. Why doesn’t Flack gag the girl?”

He almost flew along the path in his eagerness to reach the scene, his ears strained to catch the sound of

voices or a repetition of the scream. He saw nothing in his pathway—heard nothing.

But suddenly—so suddenly as to deprive him of his breath—he came in abrupt and forcible contact with a person running in the opposite direction. This person was old Ragee. The collision was equally unexpected to her, and hurled her to the ground half senseless.

Monk caught his breath and put his hand to his chest, against which the old Hindoo woman's head had bounded as if projected from a catapult. He believed that the partially stunned creature at his feet was Bernice, who had escaped from Flack.

He bent over the prostrate figure, and the old woman made an effort to arise.

“Bernice,” said Monk, in a gasping voice, “are you hurt? Good Heaven!”

A stray beam of moonlight fell upon the dull red turban and dusky visage of the old Hindoo ayah, revealing her identity most unmistakably. He stood as if paralyzed, as she slowly rose to her feet, moaning feebly.

“What are you doing here, and at this hour?” demanded Monk. “What are you after, Ragee?”

The old woman unclosed her lips to make response, but at that instant came again the shrill, frightened scream of a woman in mortal peril.

Monk waited to ask no questions. He comprehended that Bernice was in danger. He swept the cowering old Hindoo woman from his path with one powerful arm, and bounded on toward the borders of the lake.

He gained the bank. He directed one keen, sweeping glance at the chalet, and then scanned the lake, upon whose surface, save at the shadowed borders under the trees, lay the broad sheen of the pale moonlight.

Ah! what was that?

A dusky head in the bright shimmer of the moon-beams? A human head bobbing like a cork upon the waters? It rose—it fell! And now a low, shuddering cry came from it. And now it began to sink slowly under the shimmering waters!

Monk did not wait to reason, or to think how Bernice came to be in the lake, and so far out. He saw that she was there, and pulled off his boots and coat and plunged into the lake, striking out and making toward her with the skill and swiftness of a strong and powerful swimmer. He was soon at her side. Her eyes were staring. She looked like one dead. He drew her to him with one arm and struck out for the little submerged pier under the chalet.

He gained the pier and climbed upon it, still holding his burden tightly. He waded along the pier to the lower door of the chalet, in the shadow of the wide projecting balcony overhead. He produced keys from his pocket and unlocked the door, and entered the lower room of the chalet.

He staggered across the room with his burden and laid her down upon the sofa in the darkness. Then he secured the door and struck a fusee. By its light he obtained from a corner closet a lantern, which he lighted. He turned the light of this lantern full upon the face of the half-drowned girl.

“She looks like dead,” he muttered. “If she is dead, my game is up! My fortunes hang on her life!”

In a great panic he felt her pulse, and laid his hand above her heart. He could just distinguish the feeble pulsations, and he knew that she lived.

Setting down the lantern, he hurried again to the closet. Here were kept various stores for the use of the skaters, and various remedies in case of accident.

Monk found them all. He poured a draught of brandy

into a tumbler, and forced it between the girl's white lips. He chafed her hands, even while he shivered with cold and excitement.

And presently her staring eyes relaxed their stony, unmeaning gaze, and her form quivered, and a great throb at her heart sent the blood bounding through all her veins and arteries, quickening the pulses at her wrist and reddening the death-pale cheeks and lips.

Monk redoubled his exertions, chafing her delicate hands and pouring yet more brandy down her throat. She choked a little, coughed, and uttered a low moan.

"Benice!" cried Monk, softly—"Bernice, speak to me."

The young marchioness turned her eyes upon him in a glance of recognition, and feebly uttered his name.

"Yes, it is I—Gilbert," he said. "Why do you look around you in sudden fear? No one can harm you, Bernice. I found you drowning. I saved your life to-night for the second time. There, don't speak, Bernice. I'll have a fire directly, and get the better of the chill that is on us both."

He hastened to carry his words into practice.

In addition to the German porcelain stove, there was a grate in the lower room of the chalet. Gilbert Monk found a few bundles of fagots in the closet, and soon had a fire blazing on the hearth. The resinous odor of pine filled the room with fragrance. The subtle heat penetrated to every corner.

"Now, Bernice," said Monk, approaching her, "let me lead you a few turns about the room. You are weak, I know, but those wet garments will give you your death. Come!"

He lifted her gently from the sofa, and supporting her carefully, led her to and fro the room. She leaned on him heavily. Her white silk robe, saturated with

water, clung to her figure, and lay upon the floor in discolored folds. Her wet hair hung over her shoulders, dripping at every movement. Her bare arms gleamed like wet marble.

After a few turns about the room, Bernice sat down again upon the sofa, white with pain.

"I hurt my arm in falling from the balcony," she said. "It pains me. Is it broken?"

It was her left arm. Monk examined it with solicitude. No bone was broken, but the wrist was sprained, and the arm was badly bruised.

"I can do nothing for it," he said. "You must not use the arm, Bernice. It is a simple sprain, but requires a soothing liniment. It will be all right in a week, if it is well cared for, and it shall be my business to see that it is properly tended. Do you know where you are, Bernice?"

"Yes; in the chalet," answered Bernice, looking around her with the first token of interest in her surroundings which she had yet displayed. And then she told him of her encounter with Ragee, and the old ayah's attempt to kill her by tossing her into the lake.

Monk started. He had forgotten until this moment, in the greater excitement of the rescue and resuscitation of Bernice, of his meeting and collision with the old East Indian woman. Bernice noticed how his face whitened.

Monk took a solitary turn or two about the room. The conviction that old Ragee had pitted herself against him was by no means pleasant. A portion of his secret was laid bare to the ayah and his sister, and he began to fear that they would contrive to cheat him out of the prize for which he was striving. He knew the old Hindoo woman to be more subtle than a serpent,

and he hardly dared hope that he might outwit her. He was afraid of her.

"Bernice," he said, abruptly, "who is your best friend?"

"You are," the young marchioness answered, simply, with a childlike trust in him that ought to have appealed to his better nature.

"Yes, I am your best friend, Bernice. I rescued you from your very grave. I found a safe and pleasant home for you. I have proved my true friendship for you. Will you trust me to the uttermost, Bernice? Will you heed my wishes, and let me take you back to Mawr Castle?"

The girl's face grew paler, but she replied bravely :

"I owe you everything, as you say, Gilbert. And if you wish, I will go back to Wales—and—and leave Roy and the dear home I have loved—and—and all—"

"And the murderous old Hindoo ayah, who will not rest until she destroys your life!" interposed Gilbert Monk; "that is, if you remain here. I must get you out of her reach. The old creature is devoted to Sylvia, and she knows that Sylvia is betrothed to Chetwynd, and she fears that you mean to prevent their marriage. Their marriage would be legal, of course—you being dead in law after you have been buried as dead—but your re-appearance would cause a scandal. Besides, Sylvia has too much generosity to marry Roy if she knew you to be living. And so this misguided old creature, having discovered that you live, and desiring to secure Chetwynd's and Sylvia's happiness, made up her mind to remove you. She won't rest until she has accomplished her intention, unless I hide you from her."

"Then take me back to Wales. Take me away, Gilbert, this very night."

"Mrs. Crowl is over at Eastbourne in lodgings, and Flack is somewhere about the grounds. I will send him to Chetwynd-by-sea for a fly, and you shall be driven over to Eastbourne to Mrs. Crowl's lodgings. You can remain in her rooms until to-morrow evening, and then proceed to London, veiled or disguised, by the express. Mrs. Crowl and Flack will take you back to the castle."

"My clothes are wet," said Bernice. "I am very uncomfortable and I should not like to appear at Eastbourne as I am now. My cloak was carried off by old Ragee. I have a travelling bag filled with a change of garments in the little garret over the tower attic, and my travelling dress and hat are there also. Can you get them to me?"

"I will go for them, and change my own garments at once, while Flack goes for a carriage. You will remain here, Bernice? You will not give me the slip as once before, I trust."

"No, I will be here when you return. Oh, Gilbert, do you think old Ragee will come back to see if I am drowned?"

"She may be lurking about the place now. Keep the doors locked in my absence. I will give you my revolver to defend yourself in case of need. The old woman cannot penetrate into the chalet, Bernice. Keep up the fire, and your courage as well. I will be back in half an hour."

A few more words were spoken, and Gilbert Monk then left the chalet. He waited outside until Bernice had locked the door, and he then went around the house, examining all the fastenings with singular nervousness.

"It's all right," he said to himself. "She is safe in there. Ragee has no keys to the chalet, of course. Ber-

nice is brave, too, and can defend herself if need arises. And yet I'm uneasy. I would rather the ayah had not made the discovery that Bernice lives. She won't rest until she destroys her, unless I hide the girl beyond her reach. I have got a serpent to deal with, and must be as subtle as she."

Bernice had been alone but a few moments in the little Swiss chalet when she heard a peculiar scratching at the door by which Monk had departed. She was lying down at the moment upon the sofa in front of the delicious fire, the heat penetrating through her wet garments to her very vitals, but when that low sound reached her hearing she half raised herself, cresting her small, noble head, and waited in a pale expectancy for further demonstrations.

She knew that the sound had been produced by old Ragee. She knew that the murderous old Hindoo woman had observed Monk's departure, and was now prowling around the chalet, like an infuriated tigress, seeking some place of entrance.

"I can defend myself against her," thought the young marchioness. "Gilbert will soon be back, and until then I can stand a siege."

She grew paler in the very moment of making this assurance to herself, as she recognized the clinking sound produced by the contact of metal with metal.

It flashed upon her like a revelation that the old Hindoo woman possessed keys to the chalet. In that case it would seem that she was at Ragee's mercy.

She knew instinctively, after hearing the sound of clashing metal, that Ragee was endeavoring to fit a key into the lock and to push out the key already in.

With new-born strength, she sprang up from her sofa and flew to the door. She had hardly gained it when the key on the inner side dropped from the lock. As

quick as a flash Bernice thrust the key back into its socket and turned it, holding it with all her strength.

A low growling sound without attested that Ragee knew her presence and designs discovered.

Bernice cast a quick glance toward the hearth. Bundles of fagots and sticks were strewn there, and she singled out one which she thought might be used to strengthen her defence, and thrust it through the loop handle of the key, resting the point of the stick on the floor. Then she inclined her ear, listening eagerly. She heard a low, suppressed breathing outside, and knew that old Ragee was crouching there and waiting.

A few minutes passed, and then the cunning old East Indian woman softly attempted to turn the girl's key in the lock. In vain. Bernice's ready wit had proved more than equal to the emergency. The key could not be turned, and consequently could not be pushed out of the lock.

There was a smothered sound as of imprecations in the Hindoo tongue, and then Bernice heard the old woman creep stealthily away.

"She is climbing the outside stair," thought the girl, following in her mind every step taken by her enemy. "See creeps along the balcony. She unlocks the door of the upper room. Ah! now I hear her step above me. She means to descend the inner stairs, unlock the door at the foot yonder, and burst in upon me."

The girl flew across the room to the far corner, in which the light inner spiral staircase was enclosed, in a space sorresponding to the three corner closets. The door was closed, but the key was not in the lock.

The girl, it seems, was thus at the old Hindoo woman's mercy.

But Bernice did not lose her high courage. She

wheeled the sofa against the door, and piled on top of the sofa the easy-chairs.

There was an extra chair when the impromptu barricade had been made, and Bernice sat down upon this, just out of range of the stair-door, and prepared to defend the only point in the room about whose strength to resist assault she retained misgivings.

The old woman's movements were exceedingly stealthy. She crept down the stair and tried the door at its foot. It was locked. Presently Bernice heard a key fit gratingly into the key-hole, and the bolt was shot back into the lock.

A low, snarling laugh, like the subdued growl of a wild beast, came from the ayah. A moment of suspense, and then the door was pushed open an inch or two against the barricade, which Bernice saw that a vigorous assault by the old woman would sweep aside like so many toys.

"Stop where you are !" cried the young marchioness, leveling her pistol, and speaking in a tone so cool and commanding as to win a ready obedience from the crouching figure on the stair. "I am not defenceless, Ragee. Mr. Monk left his revolver with me, and I know how to use it. Stop where you are !" and her young voice ran sternly through the little chalet.

A silence of some minutes followed this speech, but after a little the door pressed with renewed force against the barricade, which yielded slightly.

Bernice stood up, white and resolute, and setting her teeth together, fired.

The ball whizzed passed the aperture of the partially open door, and buried itself in the wall. The old ayah had been in the act of trying to peer into the room, and the ball had passed within three inches of her head. She gave a stifled howl of baffled rage, and

hurled herself against the door with vehement fury. The barricade yielded now sufficiently to form an aperture large enough for the admission of the old woman's head. She thrust out that extremity of her supple body with a peculiar darting movement.

As she did so, a bullet whistled past her so dangerously near that she drew back with another howl—this time a howl of terror.

"Are you yet convinced that I am in earnest?" asked the young marchioness. "I have five shots left."

The old Hindoo began to realize that she had not a child to deal with, nor a timid girl, but a woman aroused to battle for her life, who would defend herself at any and all cost, and be weakened by no terrors.

Ragee sat down on the slender, spiral stair in dismay. She did not wish to go away and leave Bernice conqueror of the field. And she finally concluded to make a bold onslaught into the room and rush upon the girl, taking her chances of getting wounded.

Gathering all her forces, she projected herself against the door, and it yielded several inches. There was now space enough to admit her slender figure, and she cautiously prepared to avail herself of it.

Crouching, she covered her person with the barricade, and crept stealthily into the room on her hands and knees. To her astonishment, Bernice did not fire upon her. She gathered herself up like a ball, and raised her turbaned head slowly above the back of the sofa. She thought that Bernice had fainted in excess of terror, and believed herself on the point of victory. With a sudden yell of intimidation she leaped up, and bounded into the centre of the room.

To her infinite amazement, young Lady Chetwynd was not in the apartment. The door stood wide open, and outside, in plain view, Bernice was standing, supported by the arm of Gilbert Monk.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PLOTTERS ALL BUSY.

"It's all up for to-night," Ragee muttered, in her Hindoo tongue. "I must bide my time, and watch my chance. It will come soon, if I am ready. The pale-faced young girl with her baby face shall not crowd out my young mistress from her rightful position as Lady of Chetwynd. I will destroy her as I would an insect."

She shook her hand in fierce menacing at the object of her hatred, and then, growing mindful of her own safety, and not wishing to risk an encounter with Gilbert Monk, she darted down the outside staircase, and was away in the shadow of the trees almost with the rapidity of thought.

She concealed herself in a secure position at a little distance, at a point commanding a view of the door of the chalet.

Her escape was immediately discovered, and Monk said:

"You are safe now with me, Bernice. Ragee has hurried home, I am positive. She would not dare risk a meeting with me. You are pale and worn out. Let me take you from this place as soon as possible. Flack has been staying in the neighborhood since he brought

me the news of your departure from Mawr Castle, and I found him in the edge of the park as I went back to the house. I sent him to Chetwynd-by-sea for a carriage, and he will drive you over to Eastbourne directly. He is to be in waiting at the lower gate of the park, nearest the village. Here are your clothes. It would be well to lay aside those wet garments as soon as possible."

Bernice assented, and Monk went outside the chalet and closed the door. Young Lady Chetwynd secured it on the inner side, again barricaded the door at the foot of the stair, and changed her wet garments for dry ones as rapidly as the swollen and painful state of her sprained wrist would allow.

She was soon warmly clothed. She rolled up her damp garments and packed them into her travelling-bag. Her white silk robe, which had so ably served in her appearance as a spectre, was quite dry. She examined it carefully. It had been gathered up about her waist when she had fallen into the lake, and was not torn nor damaged.

She rolled up the robe and thrust it into her travelling-bag. She was attired in her bronze-gray cashmere robe and jacket, and it only now remained to put on her hat. While she was thus completing her attire, Monk came in, put out the remaining fire, scattering the embers on the hearth, and extinguished the light of the lantern, which he restored to the closet from which he had withdrawn it. Then he arranged the furniture, which Bernice had piled up in the form of a barricade, in its usual order, and conducted young Lady Chetwynd out of the chalet.

They halted outside while he locked the door, and Bernice then placed her arm in his, and they moved on among the shadows, keeping a vigilant and apprehensive

lookout around them. They wound along the narrow and dusky paths, avoiding the wider moonlit avenues, and once or twice they halted at some rustic seat, that Bernice might rest. But at last they approached the lower end of the park, and the small gate leading out upon the open highway.

"I always carry a key to this gate," said Monk, producing the key in question from his pocket. "I generally cross the park when I go to the village. Here we are, and the fly is waiting."

Flack was on the box, whip in hand. He raised his hat to the young lady and to his master.

Monk assisted Bernice into the vehicle. He hesitated about accompanying her to Eastbourne. He feared lest he should be missed from the Park, and he had another task to do on this night—a task which he dreaded, but deemed necessary to the success of his plans and even to his own well-being. But he dared not run any risk of losing Bernice again. To place her safely in the hands of Mrs. Crawl was the first and most important movement to be made. Upon his safe custody of Bernice all his plans hinged. He decided, therefore, to accompany her to Eastbourne.

"To Mrs. Crawl's lodgings, Flack," he ordered in a low voice, with a piercing glance around him. "And be lively. We've a long drive before us, and I have other business on hand to-night."

He sprang lightly into the vehicle and closed the door. The fly rolled heavily along the road on its way to Eastbourne, by Chetwynd-by-sea.

It was not yet out of sight, when the withered, dusky, witch-like face of the old Hindoo woman was pressed against the spears of the gate, and the bead-like eyes glittered as Ragee muttered:

"'To Mrs. Crawl's?' A long drive? He must be

going to Eastbourne. 'To Mrs. Crawl's lodgings' at Eastbourne, eh? I'm going to Eastbourne to-morrow. And he has other business on hand to-night! What business? I find that he is deeper than I thought. He'll bear watching. I'll know what his 'other business' is. Missy won't be troubled if I am absent all night. She trusts me. And so I'll wait to watch him. He'll be back at this gate by two o'clock, and I'll be here, too."

Meanwhile the antiquated fly and its occupants were proceeding swiftly along the road to Chetwynd-by-sea. They entered Eastbourne after a brisk drive, and Flack drove into the retired street in which Mrs. Crawl had taken lodgings. The fly presently halted before the door of a three-storied brick house, one of a row of similar houses.

"This is the place," said Monk, opening the door of the carriage and springing out.

He assisted Bernice to alight. He helped her up the steps and into the house. Mrs. Crawl received the young marchioness kindly and respectfully, and with a warmth that was very grateful to the girl. The relations between the two had been from the first as mistress and servant, and Mrs. Crawl had played her part so well as never to excite the girl's suspicions."

Mrs. Crawl led the way up stairs, Bernice and Monk following. The woman ushered them into a pleasant little parlor, where lights and a fire were burning, and drew up an easy-chair before the hearth. Bernice sank into the chair, tired and very pale.

"Miss Gwyn has sprained her wrist," said Monk. "You will know how to treat the ailment, Mrs. Crawl, without calling in a physician. To-morrow evening, Miss Gwyn will be able to start for Mawr Castle, and you will take the express for London. You will stop

at a quiet hotel in town to-morrow night, and continue your journey the next day. I will be in London also to-morrow evening—going up on the same train with you, in fact, to make all sure. We will meet at the station. And now good-night.”

He bent over Bernice and kissed her. Then he took his leave, and hurried down to the waiting carriage and set out on his return.

When the fly arrived upon the hill overlooking the village of Chetwynd-by-sea, Monk called to the driver to stop. The order was promptly obeyed. Monk alighted, and exclaimed :

“You can drive on, Flack, and return the fly to the inn. I’ll walk home, and stretch my legs after this long drive. You need not come to the Park to-morrow. Pay your bill at the inn in the morning, and go to Eastbourne. You are to take charge of Miss Gwyn and Mrs. Crawl, and have them at the station to-morrow night. I shall go up to London by the same train.”

He dismissed his confederate by a wave of the hand, and the vehicle passed on in the distance.

Monk walked briskly down the hill and into the silent village. He turned into the lonely churchyard among the graves, whose tall white headstones screened him from the possible view of any watcher, although the moonlight was still brilliant.

He crept into the little shaded stone porch, and let himself into the church. It was then about two o’clock in the morning.

It was past four, and the gray dawn was breaking, when he emerged from the church, wearied and worn and pale.

Monk went on through the village and ascended the hill beyond. At the lower gate of the Park he halted

and let himself in, and hurried along the more obscure paths toward the house.

The old Hindoo woman had watched and waited for him all these hours. She saw him enter the park, and one glance at him assured her that his "other business" had been accomplished. She arose from her crouching position and followed him stealthily homeward.

"I've made a failure of it, after all," the old woman muttered. "His business lay in the village. It concerned my lady in some way. But what was it? I'd like to know Gilbert Monk's schemes, but they all hinge on that girl. He means to preserve her life; I mean to destroy it. Which will win?"

The kitchen-maids were astir, and old Ragee, watching her opportunity, experienced no difficulty in slipping into the house unseen, at the servants' entrance. She glided up to the apartments of her mistress, whom she found sleeping. She passed on to her own room and changed her garments, and flung herself on her bed, dropping asleep.

It was somewhere about eight o'clock when Miss Monk's bell summoned her. She was a light sleeper, awakening at a sound or touch, and now started up broad awake upon the instant. She folded her turban afresh, and hastened to the bed-chamber of her mistress.

Miss Monk was in bed, her head lying back upon her pillows, a fretful expression on her swarthy face. She was annoyed and curious, and she exclaimed petulantly :

"Why did you not sleep in my room last night as usual, Ragee? Why were you not here to undress me? I kept awake till near morning from sheer terror. I cannot be alone, and you know it."

Ragee at once told her mistress the story of her

adventures during the night. Miss Monk listened in breathless eagerness.

"Gilbert is the head and front of this apparition business," said Sylvia at length. "And yet why should he wish to ruin me? He rescued her from her tomb. It's all plain to me now. And **he has** some object in defending her. But what can it be? He did not love her."

"I can see into the mystery," said the old Hindoo woman, her dusky face lighting. "The truth is he has discovered who she is. You know, Missy, she did not know her parentage. Gilbert has found out the secret. She is of noble blood, one can tell that by her haughty air, her patrician beauty, her high breeding. She looks like a princess at the least. I can see Gilbert's game now. He means to allow you to marry my lord, and he will then restore my lady to her own friends and relatives, and feather his own nest."

"But what would then become of me? I should be no wife. I should be set adrift—"

"Yes, Missy. But perhaps Mr. Gilbert would not permit things to go so far. Perhaps he will not allow you to marry my lord. Gilbert is a selfish fellow and means to look out for himself, and he won't care what becomes of you. I think he brought my lady here to play ghost. I think he means to exact a good price from my lord and from Lady Chetwynd's relatives, and then restore her to them as one from the dead."

Miss Monk looked terrified.

"What shall we do!" she whispered. "What *shall* we do, Ragee?"

"Leave it all to me. We must not suffer Gilbert to suspect how much we know of his plans. I will outwit him, and destroy the girl. Leave it to me, I say. My lady is at 'Mrs. Cowl's lodgings,' at Eastbourne. You

must send me to Eastbourne to-day, Missy, to match some of your embroideries or trimmings, or something."

"But he will not keep her at Eastbourne, where she is known. He will take her to London, and conceal her there, until he is ready to disclose the fact that she lives."

"Then I'll go to London, too," said the Hindoo, with a resolute gleam in her eyes. "I'll be more than a match for him."

Miss Monk put aside her chocolate, taking a draught of stronger drink to "steady her nerves." Then she allowed herself to be dressed in her luxurious Eastern style, and at nine o'clock was ready for breakfast. She bade Ragee await her return to her chamber, and descended to the breakfast-room.

Lord Chetwynd was already there, and Gilbert Monk followed her immediately, looking somewhat haggard and wearied. Miss Monk was very amusing, with a forced gayety, but Chetwynd was unusually silent and abstracted.

"Anything I can do for you in town, Sylvia?" inquired Monk, carelessly, as he received his second cup of coffee at the hands of the waiter. "Have you any commands for jeweler, dressmaker, bootmaker or milliner? I shall be pleased to execute any wish you may entertain. I am going up to London to-night."

"Ah, indeed?" said Miss Monk. "If you will look in at Howell and James's, and inquire when my opal bracelet will be finished, I shall be obliged. Shall you be gone long?"

"A day or so—possibly a week. Scotsby and Newman expect me, and business is business, you know."

In the early evening, immediately after dinner, Gilbert Monk drove over to Eastbourne, and to the station. He arrived at the last moment, and was ushered into a

first-class compartment occupied by two veiled ladies, of whom one was Lady Chetwynd and the other Mrs. Crawl.

The train had begun to move, when the door of the second-class compartment adjoining was hurriedly opened by the guard, and a bent old woman, with a painted white face, gray hair, a frilled cap, and a huge scuttle bonnet, was pushed in, and the door hastily shut upon her. This old woman was Ragee, the Hindoo ! And thus, environed by her enemies, young Lady Chetwynd journeyed up to London

CHAPTER XX.

IN A STATE OF UNCERTAINTY.

On arriving at the London Bridge terminus, Gilbert Monk alighted from the first-class coach he had occupied with young Lady Chetwynd and Mrs. Crawl on the journey up from Eastbourne, and raising his hat to them as to utter strangers, he crossed the platform and entered a Hansom cab, bidding the driver convey him to Haskell's Family Hotel, Piccadilly.

Flack appeared from a second-class coach near at hand, and escorted Lady Chetwynd and Mrs. Crawl to a four-wheeled cab, assisted them into the vehicle, mounted the box with the driver, and gave the same order Monk had given—Haskell's Family Hotel, Piccadilly.

An old bent woman—the Hindoo ayah cleverly disguised—had appeared from the second-class carriage adjoining the compartment occupied by Lady Chet-

wynd, had heard the orders of Monk and Flack, and now entered a cab and gave precisely the same order they had given—Haskell's Family Hotel, Piccadilly.

In the course of an hour thereafter the three several parties were comfortably quartered in the quiet family hotel they had designated. The hour was late, and Gilbert Monk did not see Bernice again that evening. The Hindoo woman registered a false name, and ascertained that Lady Chetwynd was registered as Miss Gwyn of Carnarvon.

This discovery afforded the ayah food for thought and speculation throughout the remainder of that night.

The next morning, after eating a solitary breakfast in the coffee-room of the hotel, Gilbert Monk ordered a cab, and went up to Lady Chetwynd's private parlor. He found her lying upon a couch near the window, with her hair unconfined, her face pale, and wearing an expression of physical suffering. Her white brows were contracted in pain, and she was manifestly unable to travel.

Monk gave a start of dismay,

"What is to be done?" he asked, in a tone of perplexity. "Shall I send for a physician?"

"She needs a day of rest, with warmth and stimulating food," said Mrs. Crowl. "I can treat her as well as a physician could, Mr. Monk. I'll have her ready to start for Wales in a day or two."

Monk reluctantly went out and dismissed his cab, and announced at the office of the hotel that he should prolong his stay a day or two further. He then returned to Lady Chetwynd's parlor, with a parcel of morning papers, resolved upon making the best of a bad situation.

He found Mrs. Crowl concocting an eggnog for the benefit of her patient. Bernice drank the preparation meekly, and presently dropped to sleep.

Mrs. Crowl pushed an arm-chair to the hearth, in convenient proximity to the chair occupied by Monk, and seated herself, her glances fixed upon the beautiful sleeper.

"How lovely she is!" the woman whispered. "She is superbly, radiantly beautiful. And she is so frank, so honest, so gentle, so unsuspicious of harm! She is a real lady through and through. I should like to live with her always, Mr. Monk. I wonder how you can have seen her grow beautiful under your very eyes, and become accomplished and fit to adorn the queen's drawing-room, and yet not fall in love with her!"

Monk's paper fell to his knees, and his swarthy face flushed with the consciousness of a new and suddenly conceived passion for Bernice.

Mrs. Crowl read his flush and agitation aright. She looked amazed, then pleased.

"Why, I never have suspected that you love Miss Gwyn," she exclaimed. "It's something new even to you, I know, Mr. Monk. I am delighted, sir, and I hope that if you win her you will allow me to remain with her always. I should ask nothing better than to live with Miss Gwyn all my life."

"I do not know what Miss Gwyn will say to a marriage with me," said Monk, thoughtfully. "She likes me and trusts me, that I know. She trusts you also, and you might drop a word now and then about my devotion to her, and prepare her to receive favorably, in good time, a proposal of marriage from me. If she marries me, Mrs. Crowl, you shall be her lady house-keeper, at a handsome salary, as long as you live."

Mrs. Crowl's eyes sparkled with delight.

"I advise you to let her know that you love her, sir," she whispered. "Give her something else to think of besides old troubles. Take my word for it, she'll feel

flattered and pleased, and she'll soon get used to the idea and like it. She loves you now as a sister ; it's only a step further to love you as your bride."

Monk's perceptions and intuitions not being of the finest, he was glad to accept his confederate's estimate of Bernice, and to act upon it. He resolved that he would do nothing to lessen Bernice's trust in him, but that he would delicately intimate to her, at the first suitable opportunity, that although Lord Chetwynd had forgotten her, there was one still who adored her, and who would devote his life to her if she would permit him.

The opportunity he desired did not occur before evening, when, after eating his dinner in the coffee-room, Monk returned to Lady Chetwynd's parlor. The gas was lighted here, and the curtains were drawn. The fire burned cheerily on the hearth, and before it sat Bernice, still pale, but with a brighter look on her proud dark face. She looked stronger, too, than in the morning, and greeted Monk with a smile.

He was delighted at the change in her, and sat down near her, his face beaming.

"I feared that you had retired," he said, "but you are almost well again, Bernice. Mrs. Crawl is a physician as well as a nurse. I am persuaded that you will be able to continue your journey in the morning."

Mrs. Crawl appeared from the inner room, attired for the street.

"I suppose we are to go on to the castle to-morrow, Mr. Monk," she said, "and I have a few purchases to make in town, so I must make them to-night. Miss Gwyn was not so weak as I feared. Her wrist is better, all the inflammation having gone from it, and she is quite able to travel. I shall be back in an hour, having

only to go into Oxford street, if Miss Gwyn will kindly allow me.

Bernice gave assent, and Mrs. Crowl departed.

And now was come the opportunity Monk had craved, in which to tell Bernice his love for her. But how was he to do it?

While he hesitated in what manner to begin his intended communication, Bernice broke the silence.

"Gilbert," she said, hesitatingly, "I've been thinking to-day, during my few waking hours, of how strangely I am situated. You tell me that, having apparently died, and having actually been buried, I have ceased to be Lord Chetwynd's wife. You have been very kind to me, Gilbert. You have saved my life twice; you have given me rare opportunities for improvement, and have been a noble brother to me. Roy will marry Sylvia soon, and I am left utterly alone, with no future to look forward to. I can never hope to reward you for your goodness to me. I am a helpless burden upon you, and I know that you are poor. I cannot consent to be a burden to you any longer."

"What do you propose doing?"

"I have no further interest in England. I want to go somewhere where I have at least a shadow of a claim upon some one. It is April, Gilbert, and ships can visit St. Kilda. I want you, as a last favor to me, to procure me passage to my old island home."

Monk's face grew sober, even to sadness.

"You have no home at St. Kilda now, Bernice," he said. "I don't know how to tell you, but it is better to say the truth at once. Mr. and Mrs. Gwellan were both drowned at sea last month, on a voyage from St. Kilda to Glasgow. It was in all the papers—a sad affair—"

He paused, affrighted at the dead whiteness of the

girl's face, and at the wild look in her great brown eyes.

"Dead!" she said. "Drowned?"

"Yes, Bernice. It was a terrible accident. The boat—a fishing craft—went down in a gale, with all on board."

"Dead!—drowned!" repeated the low, piteous voice, with its wild strain of incredulity. "Dead! Oh, heaven!"

The girl covered her face with her hands, and was motionless and dumb in her great horror and despair. Monk did not dare to break the silence. He had expected tears and moans, and was awe-struck and frightened at the manner in which Bernice had received the fatal news.

The slow minutes wore on. Bernice lifted her head at last, and turned toward him her white, anguished face, and her eyes full of a brooding horror. She had shed no tears, and Monk trembled as he looked upon a grief so mute, so terrible.

"They are all gone now," she said, in her broken voice—"all gone! Poor father and mother! They are happy in heaven. It is better so. I would not have them back."

"Mr. Gwellan was afflicted with heart disease, and was on his way to Scotland to consult a physician," said Monk, soothingly. "He could not have lived much longer, at the best. They have sent out a new minister to St. Kilda, and you would find no place there."

"Is there a place anywhere for me?" asked Bernice, brokenly. "I have no right to any name, no home anywhere. I am only a dependent upon you. I did not mind that, Gilbert, when I expected to go back to Roy and to have means to repay you, at least for the money you have expended upon me so generously; but now!

I cannot be dependent longer. If I have ceased to be Roy's wife, I have ceased to be your sister. I shall no longer be a dead weight upon you."

"My poor little Bernice! What can I say to you? You are no dependent upon me. I freely give you all I have. I loved you as a brother from the moment I saw you. It was that brotherly love that took me to your tomb for a last look upon your face. It was that love that made me refuse to believe you dead, even when Chetwynd had caused you to be put as he supposed, forever out of his sight. During these past fifteen months I have watched the unfolding of your beauty with tenderer affection still. Your sorrows and disappointments have drawn you nearer to me still. And now, Bernice, I love you with all my heart and soul. Come to me, Bernice. You are not alone while I live. Come to me, my darling. Be my wife, and let me devote my days to the task of making you happy."

He held out his arms to her, but she shrank from him, trembling like a leaf.

"And you, also!" she whispered. "I have lost my last friend. Ah, now I am indeed alone!"

"I do not understand you, Bernice."

"My friend is transformed into a lover," said Bernice, sorrowfully, "and I have lost my friend."

"But you have gained far more than you have lost, Bernice," said Monk, gently, yet urgently. "You have gained some one to share your sorrows, to minister to you, to rejoice with you in your joys, to weep when you weep; some one to whom the world is brighter because you live in it; some one who, for your sake, strives every day to be a better and nobler man."

"Oh, Gilbert! Don't talk to me like this! All I have left is my self-respect, and that I must maintain. To be perfectly frank with you, my French governess has

repeatedly asked me what relationship I bear to you, and has often told me that, if I were not your relative, nor a young lady of fortune under your guardianship, I ought to leave your protection, for my very name's sake. And so, Gilbert, I am not going back to Mawr Castle. I want you to crown all your obligations to me by letting me remain here at this hotel with Mrs. Crowl, until you can procure for me a suitable situation."

"You are surely wild, Bernice. I shall not consent to this absurd scheme of self-support. If you will not be my wife, you shall be my sister and ward, but I shall not let you go from me. In time, I know I shall win you to be my wife."

He arose, took her hand and felt her pulse. It was throbbing fiercely with feverish quickness. He feared to excite her by further discussion, and to strengthen her in her new resolves by further combating them. After a few remarks, therefore, on indifferent subjects, and an expression of sympathy in her bereavement of her foster parents, Monk took his departure.

He closed the door behind him softly, and went down stairs and out into the street, half angry with himself for having broached the subject of his love until after Sylvia's marriage to Lord Chetwynd.

On being left to herself, Bernice's thoughts reverted to her foster-parents, and the tears that had refused to fall before fell now in a heavy rain.

The violence of her grief soon exhausted her. Pale and with short, sobbing breaths, she lay back in her chair like a flower nearly beaten out of life by some fearful storm; and as she lay there the door softly opened, and an old woman in a rusty alpaca gown, a scuttle bonnet, and a heavy black lace veil over her face, slowly and silently entered the room, closing the door behind her. It was the Hindoo ayah.

The old East Indian ayah's disguise was perfect, and Bernice could not have detected under it her mortal enemy. It must have been, then, some subtle instinct that warned young Lady Chetwynd of the near presence of danger. She rose up swiftly and silently and retreated toward the door of her bedroom adjoining, her big brown eyes dilating, and her white face, under all its calm bravery, indicating a quick, spasmodic terror.

"This is a private room, madam," she said, with a gesture toward the door, endeavoring to speak quietly.

The disguised ayah came a pace nearer. Something in her stealthy movement, like the springing step of a tiger, reminded Bernice of the Hindoo woman, and she knew her under all her disguise. The young marchioness made a further retreat.

"If you do not withdraw immediately," said her ladyship, "I shall ring this bell."

The ayah fumbled in her pocket and drew forth a soiled scrap of paper, on which some words were written. Then she moved toward young Lady Chetwynd, extending the paper as she did so; and Bernice's sharpened vision caught the gleam of a glass vial in the woman's hand.

The young girl had conceived an awful terror of the stealthy Hindoo. She knew that the woman had followed her up to London with intent to kill her; and on the moment, as the woman thus approached her with the extended document, the girl sprang back into her own room, and closed the door and bolted it, in a panic of affright.

The act announced to the Hindoo ayah that her identity was discovered, and that nothing remained for her but retreat. She made that retreat immediately, slipping back to her own room, and leaving her door ajar.

She had barely thus hidden herself, when she heard a rustling sound in the corridor, and beheld from the gloom of her darkened room the powerful figure of Mrs. Crowl, as that person, laden with parcels, passed into Lady Chetwynd's parlor.

Bernice had told Mrs. Crowl of her sinister visitor, but both supposed that the Hindoo woman had quitted the house, and they did not consider it wise to raise a futile alarm.

The various excitements of the evening had altogether proved too much for Bernice to endure calmly, and she went to her bed. Mrs. Crowl sat up to acquaint Monk with the fact of the Hindoo woman's visit.

Gilbert Monk was passing the door on his way to his own room about ten o'clock, when Mrs. Crowl, recognizing his step, went out and called him into Lady Chetwynd's parlor. She told him of Ragee's visit, and he listened in horror and amazement.

"It seems, then," said Monk, "that the old Hindoo witch has discovered Bernice's assumed name. She must have followed us up from Eastbourne to this very hotel. She means death to Bernice. We must watch our charge. We will leave London in the morning, and we must contrive to throw that witch off our trail. If she were once to know the way to Mawr Castle, Bernice would never be safe. This is a bad business. I am uneasy—afraid."

He went to his own room with a gloom upon him that he could not shake off.

Meanwhile Bernice, alone in her own bed-room, was not asleep. She was thinking. She reviewed in detail all the events of her short life. She realized her desolation. She said to herself that she was forgotten

by all who knew her, and that there was no place for her on earth as Bernice Chetwynd.

She shrank from living longer dependent upon Gilbert Monk. She believed now that he expected a recompense for all his care of her in the shape of her hand in marriage. Loving her husband with all her heart, she could not marry Monk. And, strangely enough, now that Monk had avowed for her a love deeper than the love of a brother, she began to shrink from him and to feel a sense of repulsion against him.

She must earn her living some time ; why not begin at once ? She was fully competent to instruct children ; why should she not do so ? She could not return to Mawr Castle, and Monk would not consent to allow her to leave his care. She must, then, if she intended to help herself, go away secretly. And in stealing away from those she believed to be her friends, Bernice believed that she would also escape from the one she knew to be her enemy. She began to be in haste to be gone.

At daybreak Bernice was up and dressed. Mrs. Crawl had not visited her during the night, and was now sleeping heavily in her own room on the other side of the parlor. Bernice had put on her travelling costume, her only outer garments at command. Her little bag had been packed by Mrs. Crawl for travelling. She put on her hat, and then sat down at her window, emptied her pocket-book in her lap, and counted her small hoard of money, finding that she possessed some fifteen pounds.

She put her pocket-book in her bosom, and buttoned her dress and jacket over it. She tied on her scarf and her doubled gray grenadine vail. She was all ready to start, and began to find a positive relief in the thought of battling with the world for her bread.

She waited a little till the tide of shop girls began to move along Piccadilly toward Regent Circus, and then, with her heart throbbing wildly, she arose and unfastened her door, and stole into her private parlor, bag in hand.

She could hear Mrs. Crowl breathing heavily. She crossed the floor and let herself out into the corridor. Gilbert Monk was sleeping in his room, and old Ragee was also asleep in her chamber opposite, unsuspecting of the fact that her prey was escaping her.

Bernice glided down the stairs unnoticed. She paused in the lower hall. The door at the private entrance was open, and a boy was engaged in scouring the stone steps. As Bernice appeared, he straggled out into the street to speak to a passing shop-boy, and young Lady Chetwynd passed out at the open door into the street unchallenged.

CHAPTER XXI.

A POOR HAVEN OF REFUGE.

Bernice had no clearly defined plans on leaving the hotel. She knew no one in London. She knew nothing of the wickedness that lurks on every side in the great metropolis. She had money, and in her simplicity she imagined that she would easily find a home in that great wilderness of houses.

But how to find the desired home she did not yet know. She joined the tide of shop girls, and walked on to Regent Circus in the gray chill of the early morning.

She wandered on hour after hour, bearing her travel-

ling bag. No one seemed to notice her. The few people whom she met appeared absorbed in their own affairs, and bestowed scarcely a passing glance upon the veiled and slender young figure that trudged so wearily onward.

"It is time I found lodgings," thought Bernice, with a horrible sense of her loneliness creeping upon her. "I must procure them immediately. It would be terrible to have the day wear on and the night come and find me shelterless."

But the task was not so easy as it seemed.

There were placards in plenty in windows signifying that the houses to which they pertained were to be let. And there were little yellow bills and pieces of white paper in other windows, with the legend, "Apartments to let," but the houses were for the most part dingy and cheerless, of the cheaper grade of lodging-houses, and Bernice recoiled from the frowsy heads at the windows, the broken panes of glass, and the slipshod maids on the steps.

She turned from one street into another, growing more tired and less fastidious at every step.

At noon, nearly exhausted, she went into a pastry-cook's shop and asked for a cup of tea and a roll. These were supplied her, and she was given a chair, but such demands in that quarter of Kentish Town were apparently not numerous, and Bernice felt herself to be an object of considerable curiosity to the shopkeeper and single attendant.

On paying her small bill at the counter, she inquired if lodgings were to be obtained in the neighborhood, adding that she was a stranger in London and could not give references.

"There are lodgings to be had in the neighborhood, Miss—plenty on 'em," replied the shopkeeper; "but ref-

erences are generally required. Some lodging-house keepers may be willing to take pay in advance instead. A young girl like you ought not to be hunting lodgings by herself. There's dangers and perils lurking on every side for a beautiful young creature like you," and she looked with compassionate interest at the pure, pale, high-bred face, lit up by dark, sorrowful eyes. "Why, you are a real lady, Miss. You surely ought to have friends somewhere."

"My friends are dead," said Bernice, her lips quivering. "My father was a minister of the Scottish Kirk. I am alone in the world, madam, and am come here to earn my own living. I want to get lodgings while I seek a situation as governess."

The shopkeeper meditated. She was an elderly woman, with daughters of her own. She saw that Bernice was a stranger to London ways, that she seemed like a pupil fresh from a convent or place of equal seclusion, and she trembled at the pitfalls that lay before one so innocent, so unsuspecting and so guileless.

"I believe in you, Miss," the woman said, abruptly, after a long, searching scrutiny of the lovely half-shaded face. "I'm not a person easily taken in, as people will tell you, but I believe in you, and I'll tell you of a respectable lodging-house where you may get a room. It's around the corner in Victoria Road. It's kept by a very good customer of mine, a woman that's made a pretty penny. She's a little queer, Miss, but her lodgers are all respectable, and the house is that neat you might eat off the kitchen floor. The woman's name is Mrs. Sharp, which sharp is also her nature. If you pay in advance and tell her I sent you, which my name is Gibbons, I know she'll do well by you—as long

as your money lasts. And you can't expect strangers to do for you no longer, you know, Miss."

Bernice assented, and obtained the address of Mrs. Sharp, and then thanking the shopkeeper, set out in search of Mrs. Sharp's lodging-house.

Turning the adjacent corner, Bernice found herself in Victoria Road, a dingy street lined with rows of dull brick houses. Here, as elsewhere, were plenty of apartments to let, but young Lady Chetwynd pressed on to number forty-two, Mrs. Sharp's residence. It was the corner house of the row, and presented a brighter and cleaner appearance than its neighbors. The stone steps were very clean, the windows were all spotless, and the brass knocker was polished like gold. Bernice sounded the knocker twice or thrice heavily.

A servant maid admitted her into a very narrow hall, and Bernice asked for Mrs. Sharp. The maid ushered Lady Chetwynd into a small parlor, and hurried away to her mistress.

Bernice's gaze wandered about the room. Its aspect was chill, cold, barren and prim, and the very essence of respectability pervaded it.

A heavy step was heard in the narrow, oil-clothed hall, and Mrs. Sharp entered the presence of her visitor.

Bernice arose and bowed courteously, stating the object of her call.

Mrs. Sharp listened till Bernice completed her statement, and then coldly said :

"So Mrs. Gibbons sent you to me, and you have no references? I pride myself, Miss, upon the respectability of my house, and I shouldn't feel justified in taking in a young person without references."

"But I am a stranger in London," said Bernice, with gentle sweetness and a shadow of pleading in her fresh young voice. "I am very tired, madam, and I long for

a place in which I can rest. My father was a minister of the kirk. He has recently died. I must earn my own living as a governess, and it will be of advantage to me to give as my address a very respectable lodging-house. I will pay you in advance."

"I prefer gentlemen," said Mrs. Sharp, showing signs of relenting. "They can get their meals, all but breakfast, out."

"I am willing to get my own meals, madam."

"If you can wait on yourself and cook your own meals—not in my kitchen, though—and can pay in advance, and have no company, and live quiet, and are not out evenings, why, then," said Mrs. Sharp, "I don't know but I'd consent to take you in. But one thing must be understood: When your money is gone you must go away quietly, without a word. Is that a bargain?"

"Yes," said Bernice, "I agree to all this."

"Then you can come this evening. There is a grate in your room, and you can buy a spirit lamp to make your coffee on. You can get meat roasted at the pastry-cook's. Will you look at your room?"

"If you please, madam. I—I should like to stay now," said Bernice, bravely, although her cheeks flushed.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Sharp, suspiciously. "Where is your luggage?"

"All I have is in this bag," answered Bernice. "I am poor, madam—"

"Hum! I should think so. My room is sixteen shillings a week in advance, and no money no room. That's my motto. Now if you want to see the room, come up."

Bernice assented, and Mrs. Sharp led her up three narrow flights of stairs to the fourth floor, and ushered

her into the front room, which contained few, if any comforts beyond the barest necessities of existence. But bare as was the room, Bernice looked upon it as a very haven of refuge.

"It is all in order," she observed. "Why may I not remain here now? Here is the first week's rent."

She produced her pocket-book, and took from it a sovereign. Mrs. Sharp saw that more money remained in the purse, and consented to allow her lodger to remain.

"I don't know where to get a spirit lamp," said Bernice, hesitatingly. "I—I never went into a shop alone. Would you not kindly send a servant upon a few errands for me, madam? I am willing to pay for the favor."

"I don't want any pay for allowing the maid to go, but if you choose to pay her, that's your affair and hers. I will send her up to you," said Mrs. Sharp, with unwonted graciousness, and the lodging-house keeper retired, soon sending up her housemaid.

This young woman had an honest, trustworthy face, and Bernice liked her. She consulted with her in regard to her wants, and gave her a sovereign to expend for her in materials for housekeeping. The young woman departed, and was absent an hour, but finally returned with her arms full. She was followed by a small boy, who carried a basket full of stores. The housemaid emptied the basket and dismissed the boy.

"I've got every thing you mentioned, Miss," she observed, "and some things you did not speak of. There's the *Times* as you was so particular to have. I did not buy it; I hired it till evening. It's been hired out all the morning, and was just brought back. Here's fagots for the fire, and chill it is, and I'll kindle a little blaze—you look so cold and tired. I've ordered in a bushel of coals, to put into your closet yonder. And

here is bread, and a cold roasted fowl, and a tea-kettle and a spirit lamp. And here's nine shillings left."

Bernice bestowed a liberal gratuity upon the servant, who hastened to make up a bright fire, and to wheel up a big chair before it, and to fill the tea-kettle and set it on the hob. Bernice took possession of the big chair, and read over the columns of Wants in the *Times*. She had imagined that a situation as governess would be readily found, but she found no advertisement in the paper that seemed intended for her.

"I'll advertise, myself," she thought, suddenly, the idea striking her, as she believed, like an inspiration. "I will write out an honest advertisement, saying what I can do. Surely, among all the millions of English people, some one will want me."

She brooded over the idea while the housemaid made her tea and placed the few edibles on the bare table. When the girl was gone out Bernice drank her tea and ate her bread and jam, and a portion of cold fowl, with actual relish, and then wrote with the small gold pencil on her chain, upon a piece of wrapping paper that had enveloped the sugar, a notice that ran as follows :

"WANTED—By a young lady without references, an orphan and a stranger in London, a situation as governess. Understands English, French and German, music, drawing and dancing. Would accept a very small salary. Address Miss G., *Times* office."

It seemed to Bernice that this advertisement could not fail to secure the situation she desired, and she decided to put it in three of the morning papers. In the course of the afternoon she called up the housemaid and unfolded her plans to her, and the young

woman undertook to procure the insertion of the advertisement in the newspapers.

When the housemaid had retired, young Lady Chetwynd counted over the contents of her purse with a sigh. The sum she had thought so large only that morning was slipping through her fingers with unpleasant rapidity.

"I must get something to do before it is all gone," she thought. "At any rate, I have found a safe and respectable shelter. I will economize in my food, and make my money go as far as may be. There must be no more fowls, no meat ; and whatever my privations and poverty, I am not dependent upon any one now but myself."

Day after day passed, and no satisfactory response came to Bernice's advertisement. She consulted Mrs. Sharp as to how she could become a governess.

"You will never be one, Miss—never ! You are too young, too ignorant of the world, too beautiful. Your life is a mystery. You don't know who you are, nor whence you came. It an't in nature for a young girl like you, who have been so tenderly nurtured and educated like a fine lady, who *are* a lady, to be wandering about so utterly friendless ;" and Mrs. Sharp looked severely upon her young lodger. "And no one will engage a young lady to educate their children who has no one in the world to speak a good word for her, or to say that she is a respectable young woman. People don't trust their children to any and everybody without making inquiries. I advise you not to waste any more money in advertising."

"Is there anything I can do without being called upon for references ?"

"Are you a skillful milliner ? Can you make dresses ? Have you any trade ? Do you understand any kind of

handwork? No? Then your chance is a slim one. A genteel, fine lady without a trade, and without money, and without friends, is a helpless object, indeed. I'm sure I don't know what is to become of you. You can't expect me to keep you no longer than your money lasts."

"Certainly not."

"I work hard for my money," pursued Mrs. Sharp, in an aggrieved voice, "and I won't pay for a roof to shelter them as is too fine or too lazy to work. That's what I won't."

There was a light in her cold hard eyes before which Bernice shrank back afraid. She saw that the woman did not intend to lose money by her, but she did not resent Mrs. Sharp's manner. To the contrary she spoke in a subdued, sorrowful voice, as she answered:

"I want work, madam, and I am willing and anxious to work. Can I not learn a trade? Can I not learn to make bonnets or dresses?"

"Who is to apprentice you and pay the necessary premium? I don't see anything before you but to become a maid-of-all-work; and what lady would want a finer lady in her kitchen than herself? I advise you to write to your friends, and have them take you away. Your money'll soon be gone, and then will come the almshouse—or a return to your friends, if you've got any. You can think over what I've said, and when your funds get low you can decide what you can do."

"I would like to pay for my lodgings a month in advance," said Bernice, her face very white, and a brooding anxiety in her dusky eyes. "I would like to make sure of a shelter as long as possible."

She made the necessary amount, and Mrs. Sharp wrote her out a receipt, writing materials being on the table. The landlady then withdrew, and Bernice was left to herself. And now began for young Lady Chet-

wynd a struggle for existence, such as is endured by many a high-bred and educated young woman, and which involved so much of suffering, of "hope deferred," and of bitter anguish, that one recoils from recording it.

During the three weeks of her stay in the house, Bernice had not made a single friend. Her fellow-lodgers seemed scarcely aware of her existence. Her landlady looked upon her with growing coldness, knowing that Bernice's funds were running low. Mrs. Sharp knew well the contents of the small parcels which Bernice now brought in for herself. She knew that her young lodger was growing paler and thinner day by day; she noticed that the elastic young step began to flag, that the girl's tread on the stair grew daily lighter and slower; she saw that the dusky eyes grew larger and brighter, shining with a lustre as bright as unnatural. And knowing and seeing all this, Mrs. Sharp began to fear that her young lodger would fall sick in her house, and she grew anxious for the month to terminate, that she might send Bernice away.

During all this time Bernice had seen no one whom she knew. Gilbert Monk had obtained no trace of her, although he had set Mrs. Crawl and Flack to search for her throughout London, where he was convinced that she still remained. He had gone down to Chetwynd Park, and was waiting and watching for her there, knowing that sooner or later she would return to the old home and the dear presence that held such fascination for her.

And thus the month had gone by, and two days only remained to Bernice before she must become again homeless and shelterless. She had but a few shillings in her purse. She was weak, tired, anxious and sorrowing. And now came upon her the longing Gilbert

Monk had anticipated—to look once more upon Lord Chetwynd's face.

“I may not live long,” she thought. “I *must* see him. He need not—he must not—see me. I have my burial dress still. I can pass for a ghost as before, if danger of discovery arises. Gilbert Monk has long since given over the search for me, and is no doubt in London reading law. I must see Roy once more before she claims him. I am in no danger of discovery. I shall be very guarded. But I *must* learn when the marriage is to take place. I am dying with my yearning for Roy—my husband.”

She could not withstand that sick longing of her soul. She persuaded herself that she would incur no risk of discovery. And on the very night before her rent was to expire Bernice packed her travelling-bag afresh, and stole out of her lodgings late in the afternoon, unseen by any inmates of the house, and hiring a cab, proceeded to the railway station. And soon after dark, closely veiled, she was seated in a second-class railway coach on her way to Eastbourne. She alighted on reaching her destination, secured a fly at the station, and pursued her journey to Chetwynd-by-sea. Here she dismissed the vehicle, bidding the driver wait for her at the village inn, and in the dark, cool May night, with only a few stars gleaming through the azure dusk, she pursued her way on foot to Chetwynd Park—her lost home.



CHAPTER XXII.

NEARLY DETECTED.

At the very moment when the wronged young Lady Chetwynd stole like a shadow into her husband's house at Chetwynd Park, and crept up to a lonely attic to don her ghostly robes, in which she believed she might steal to her husband's very side, and still pass for a spectre, or an illusion—at that moment Lord Chetwynd and Sylvia Monk were alone together in the music-room.

Miss Monk had been playing some brilliant fantasia upon the grand piano, and her jeweled fingers were still softly pressing the pearl keys, evoking disconnected sounds, while her densely black, half-open eyes rested in a longing, absorbing gaze upon the fair face of the young marquis.

Lord Chetwynd was walking slowly up and down the length of the room, his arms folded across his breast, a thoughtful shadow on his face. The mellow light filtered down through pale tinted globes upon Sylvia Monk's dark East Indian beauty, and Lord Chetwynd, looking at her, noticed for the first time the pale terror and anxiety in her face and eyes.

"What is the matter, Sylvia?" he asked, kindly.
"You are looking ill."

"There is nothing the matter more than usual, Roy," said Miss Monk, her fingers still dropping softly on the

keys. "I am not quite well of late, and you have been too absorbed in your memorial school and your tenants to notice the fact ; that is all."

Lord Chetwynd looked startled and anxious. A deeper gravity settled about his delicate mouth under the shadow of his golden moustache, and upon his white brows.

"Have I seemed neglectful, Sylvia?" he asked, in tones of self-reproach. "I have been absorbed in my school, I know. I have never concealed from you that Bernice dead is more to me than any woman living. But I love you also, Sylvia. I appreciate your unselfish devotion to me, your gentle sweetness, your earnest love. Believe me, sorrowful and hopeless as I am, I am not insensible to, nor ungrateful for, the great gift of your pure, warm, true heart. In time, perhaps," and his voice grew broken, "in time I may learn to love you as you deserve to be loved. But now, Sylvia, be patient with me, and let the mantle of your love and charity cover all my short-comings."

She whirled around upon her music-stool. Lord Chetwynd felt for her a sudden pity. He moved toward her under the impulse of that tender pity, and took her in his arms.

And just then a light, soft step came noiselessly along the flower-bordered aisles of the great conservatory, and approached the door of the music-room whence the sound of voices issued. The new-comer was Bernice, in her silken burial robes.

All unconscious of the near proximity of the young wife whose death he mourned so despairingly, Lord Chetwynd bent in pitying affection above the false-hearted being who had wrought him so much woe, and whom he was promised to marry.

He took Sylvia's head in his bosom, and the swarthy

East Indian face, with its carnation cheeks, lay on his breast, and the black eyes looked love at him. And just then the sliding doors slipped noiselessly apart at a touch, and Bernice looked in upon them.

Neither saw her. Chetwynd was gazing down into the black, fathomless eyes of Sylvia, and Sylvia was unconscious of all but him and her love for him.

Poor Bernice stood transfixed. Ah, indeed, she thought, her place was filled. The caresses that had thrilled her loving soul were lavished now upon Sylvia. She looked at the pair wildly, and a low, smothered cry burst from her white lips.

Chetwynd heard the faint sound, and turned and beheld her.

For a moment he stood transfixed. Then, with a wild cry, he dropped Sylvia from his hold, as if she had been some inanimate thing, and bounded toward this seeming spectre.

Bernice fled before him like a vision.

Miss Monk caught a glimpse of the white robe, the whiter face framed in masses of floating, dusky hair, and with a shriek came rushing into the conservatory.

Bernice flew on down the long flowery aisle, her eyes fixed upon the distant open door. She was light and fleet. She sped on before Chetwynd like a shining meteor. At the junction of another aisle she tripped and stumbled upon a misplaced flower-pot. Chetwynd now gained on her. His breathing sounded hoarsely in her ears. Her panic increased. She could not see the way before her. She stumbled again—and now Chetwynd reached out his hand to grasp her. She was away again like a flash, but he had caught the lace frills of her short elbow sleeves in his hand, and the yellow film gave way and remained in his clutch, while she flew on and out at the open door.

He was at the door the next instant, but the seeming spectre had disappeared. There was a faint starlight, and he could trace the forms of the clumps of trees and shrubbery dotting the lawn, but the shining vision was nowhere in sight.

He searched the gardens and lawns, the cliffs and the beach, but in vain. He never thought of looking into the shadow of the porch covering the garden entrance to the house. But there, on the deep garden-seat, Bernice had crouched until he had passed on toward the cliffs, and then she hurried into the house and up the private stair to the attics.

Her escape had not been made an instant too soon. She had scarcely disappeared, when Miss Monk came rushing out of the conservatory, and turned her steps to the porch where the young marchioness had been hidden.

"The door is ajar," muttered Sylvia, with a baleful gleam in her black eyes. "She has gone into the house. She evidently intends to hide. As she does not intend to reveal herself, I am so far safe."

She closed the door, that Chetwynd might not be tempted to enter it on his return from his search about the grounds, and slowly re-entered the conservatory.

"I shall pretend that I did not see her," she thought, halting in the doorway and looking out into the dim, fragrant night. "It is best to treat her appearance as Chetwynd's illusion. She is in the house. Gilbert must not know of her presence here, and I must warn Ragee at once. My old ayah may find means to remove her forever from my path this very night."

Miss Monk returned to the music-room, and thence proceeded to her own apartments. She found the East Indian woman crouching before her boudoir fire. She

told her briefly what had occurred, and enjoined her to an absolute caution and silence.

"Leave it all to me, Missy," said the Hindoo. "My lady shall not trouble you after to-night. I think she is gone up to the attics to change her gown. I will go and search for her. Go back to my lord with an easy heart, Missy. After to-night no ghost will haunt Chetwynd Park."

The old woman spoke with a subtle menace which her mistress fully understood. The Hindoo went into the dressing-room and unlocked the Indian cabinet, extracting several articles from the secret drawer within. Then, with the face of a smiling demon, she concealed the articles in her bosom, and stole away out of the room, and crept stealthily up to the attics.

Miss Monk paused to take a sip of her soothing draught, and then set out on her return to the music-room.

In the hall, just outside the door, she encountered her brother, who was in dressing-gown and slippers, and appeared just aroused from slumber.

"What's the row, Sylvia?" he asked. "What does all this skurrying up and down stairs mean? What has happened?"

"Nothing! nothing!" cried Miss Monk, with an eagerness that aroused his suspicions that something was wrong. "I came up to my room for a piece of music. Go back to bed, Gilbert. I must return to the marquis, who is waiting for me."

She moved away as she spoke, and hastened to descend the stairs. Monk caressed his beard while he looked thoughtfully after her. She said she had come up to her room for a piece of music, but her hands were empty. Mr. Monk, being very astute upon occasion, whistled softly and went back to his room, drew on his

coat and boots, and also hurried down to the music-room.

His sister was in the room alone, and greeted his appearance with a black frown.

"Do go back, Gilbert!" she exclaimed. "Roy and I are having a private interview. He will not like this interruption. Go, or you will regret it."

"Hum!" said Mr. Monk, flinging himself into a chair. "I shall regret it if I do go, no doubt. I know you, my amiable sister, and I choose to remain here until your lover comes. Some game is afoot— Ha! what's that?"

There was a sound of hurried footsteps in the conservatory, and Lord Chetwynd rushed into the music-room, pale, wild and disordered. Monk leaped to his feet in amazement. The marquis looked past him with a wandering gaze.

"Has she been back?" demanded Chetwynd. "I have missed her."

"Who?" cried Sylvia and Gilbert Monk, in a breath, the former pale, the latter eager.

"Bernice—my wife! Did she come back this way?" repeated Chetwynd. "My God! Have I lost her again?"

"Ah, has the spectre appeared to you again, my lord?" questioned Monk, his face flaming. "Has the ghost been here?"

"Yes. Bernice came and looked in upon us, as Sylvia and I stood yonder. She sighed, or moaned, and the sound went to my soul. I saw her face, and it was pale and sorrowful, yet glorious in its beauty and loveliness. Sylvia saw it also—"

"No, no—I saw no ghost!"

Chetwynd turned upon Sylvia a look of amazement.

"Surely you saw her," he declared. "You looked toward her—you did see her—"

"And I say I did not. I saw no spectre whatever. Do you think, my lord, that we are all victims of your peculiar craze? I tell you again I did not see the apparition, or illusion, or whatever it might be called. I swear I did not see it."

"And you looked toward yonder door, Sylvia?"

"I did. I looked straight at yonder doorway," affirmed the swarthy beauty. "Had anything been there even a shadow, I must have seen it. But there was nothing there."

"My lord," said Monk, calming himself by a strong effort and speaking soothingly, "you deceive yourself. Sylvia did not see her, and had there been a woman Sylvia must have seen her. You have experienced a recurrence of your singular optical illusion."

"I will not hear that word again, Monk," said his lordship, excitedly, his face flushing. "'Illusion!' Why, she ran along the conservatory, and I heard her light footfalls. She tripped upon a flower-pot left in the path. I was as near to her as I am to you. I reached out my arm to grasp her—and I caught this!"

He unclosed his clenched hand, and displayed a fragment of point lace, yellow and wrinkled and stained, with jagged edges, just as he had torn it from Bernice's sleeve.

Gilbert Monk and Sylvia stared appalled.

Here was evidence such as they had not counted on that the spectral visitor was a living woman. Both stood dumb, not knowing what to say.

Chetwynd laid the scrap of lace flat upon his hand.

"The mystery deepens," he said, hoarsely. "But that I myself saw my wife die, but that I myself saw her buried, I should say that she lives and has been

here to-night. Look at this lace. It was on her burial robe—the robe she wore on her first evening in this house. She had the gown made in London. I remember her innocent delight at the pattern of this lace. There were branching palms done in film, as one might say. And here is the palm nearly perfect. If my visitor were a ghost, would she wear tangible lace? And whoever she is, how came she with this lace which I remember so well?”

“Chetwynd,” said Monk, slowly, “I think you are the prey of some designing woman who presumes on her resemblance to Bernice. Calm yourself. Look at the matter dispassionately, if you can. Bernice is dead so your visitor cannot be she. If it is not a spectre, then it must be, as I said, some designing woman.”

“But the face was pure and noble—”

“That proves nothing. The face might even have been a mask. Let us resume your search, but very quietly, so that the servants may not suspect what we are doing. You search the park, and I will search the cliffs and beach. Shall it be so?”

The marquis assented and thrust the lace in his pocket and went out with a perplexed and troubled face. The mystery had indeed deepened, and his mind was in a state of chaos. He hurried out towards the park, into whose dark recesses he plunged and disappeared.

Monk did not linger to speak to his sister. He, too, hurried out of the house, but he did not go to the cliffs. To the contrary, he went to the garden entrance and stole into the house, and made his way up to the attics, as Ragee had done before him.

“I’ll find her up here,” he thought. “She has come up to change her gown. I have been mighty near to ruin to-night. Once I get possession of her again I’ll hold her fast, so that she shall not escape me.”

Gilbert Monk went from attic to attic in a vain and rambling search for Bernice. After a few minutes thus spent, he became conscious that some one was moving in the rooms in advance of him. He leaped to the conclusion that Bernice was fleeing before him, and he hurried forward, intent upon her capture, moving swiftly and almost noiselessly, having removed his boots at the outset.

He gained upon the stealthy person in advance, and soon became aware of the fact that she had halted and was hiding somewhere in the stillness and darkness.

He moved on more cautiously, determined not to pass his quarry in the darkness. He crept across a long, low, ill-lighted attic, at the end of which was an open doorway giving into a smaller, darker room. Listening, he was sure that he heard suppressed breathing in that inner room.

"I have her now!" he said to himself, exultantly. "She shall not escape me again. My glove of velvet shall conceal a hand of iron. Now, my lady, I have you like a bird in a cage. There is no outlet to yonder room I fancy, save through this. You are caught at last!"

He hastened in his stockinged feet toward the low doorway, and passed into the deeper darkness of the inner room.

In the same instant a figure just within the doorway sprang upon him, and a pair of long, supple hands stole about his neck, as seeking to strangle him.

"Ha! I have you now!" hissed a voice which he recognized as that of the East Indian woman. "This time, girl, you die!"

The long fingers twisted themselves like snakes around his neck and the old woman clung to him like a horrible incubus. But suddenly her fingers came in

contact with his beard. The shock of a great surprise unnerved her fingers. The thug-like hold on him relaxed ; and now Monk seized his assailant and flung her from him like some venomous reptile, hurling her to the floor, as he cried out :

“ You accursed hag ! You here ? ”

“ You here, Mr. Gilbert ? ” said the old Hindoo, in a choked voice, gathering herself up, and scowling at him through the darkness.

“ Curse you ! ” said Monk, angrily. “ I ought to kill you, you infamous Thug ! ”

The old woman muttered an unintelligible response in her own tongue.

“ Get out of this ! ” said Monk, authoritatively. “ If you make another move against Lady Chetwynd I’ll have you sent away from Chetwynd Park. You tried to murder her ladyship at the skaters’ chalet. You’d better draw off now. You’re fighting me ; do you understand ? I know you, root and branch. I overheard that little interview of yours with Sylvia some sixteen months ago, and I know all your schemes. I permitted the mock death and the mock funeral for reasons of my own. I have had charge of my lady ever since. I am working out schemes of my own, but they will not interfere with those of Sylvia. My sister shall be Lady of Chetwynd. I am only trying to make a little money. Are you content now ? ”

The old woman snarled in dissatisfaction. She did not believe Monk’s protestations. Her determination that Bernice should die gathered new strength. But she realized, as did Monk, that they were wasting time in talking which should be devoted to pursuit. Therefore she said, with a hypocritical whine, which did not in the least deceive her opponent :

"If you say it's all right, Mr. Gilbert, I suppose it is, and I'll go down stairs."

With this she abruptly darted past him into the larger attic and glided into the corridor beyond.

"She has resumed her search," muttered Monk. "It's to be a race between us which shall find Bernice first. Lest some devilish instinct should guide old Ragee, whom the fiends protect, I think I'll follow her. We are sure soon to find Bernice. And I will look in the upper garret to which Bernice sent me before."

He hurried out, but the Hindoo had disappeared.

He sought for her, but he could not find her. He tramped from room to room, but she eluded him. He visited the little garret in which Bernice had before hidden, but the youthful marchioness was not there, and there was no token of her recent presence.

He searched for hours, until he was fatigued and wrathful, and persuaded that he had been completely baffled. Then he went down sullenly to his own room.

He had scarcely composed his features to even a semblance of their ordinary calm, when a knock was heard upon his door, and in obedience to his summons Lord Chetwynd entered the room.

The young marquis still wore a pale, disordered countenance. His blue eyes were burning. His golden hair was tossed back from his bronze brows in strange dishevelment. He looked still excited, anxious and perplexed, yet determined to solve the mystery that encompassed him.

"I've been to your room twice, Gilbert," said his lordship, abruptly, "and you were not in. Have you just returned from your search?"

"But five minutes since," replied Monk, arising and proffering a chair. "I have searched the cliffs and

beach and boat-houses, and have not found a trace of your singular visitor. I have even searched the house high and low, fancying that the visitor might be one of the housemaids masquerading for your benefit, but I have not gained any light upon the mystery."

"The mystery will soon be solved," said his lordship, with increasing calmness. "I have at last something tangible to work upon. So long as I supposed that I was dealing with the supernatural—and what else could I think?—I was helpless. But this fragment of lace proves that my visitor is living, and I intend to know who she is. The mystery shall be probed to the bottom. At present I know not what to think, and I shall summon assistance in the solution of the affair. I shall need your help also, Gilbert. I shall telegraph to Scotland Yard in the morning for a skilled detective to be sent down immediately."

Monk changed color and his heart beat more quickly.

"As long as there is a possibility that some one of the servants may be concerned in the affair," continued Chetwynd, "I shall keep the identity of the detective a profound secret between ourselves. I will not even intrust the telegram to a servant, and I shall beg you to take it over to Eastbourne and transmit it yourself. I can trust you, Gilbert, but whom else? I shall not know until I have solved this mystery."

"I shall be glad to be of service to you, Chetwynd. Command me in any way you please. I will set out at daybreak, if you like. And the better to conceal my errand from the household here, I'll walk over to Chetwynd-by-sea and hire a fly at the inn there."

Lord Chetwynd acceded, and drew out his notebook and wrote a message upon a loose sheet, addressing it to the superintendent at Scotland Yard, London. He gave this into Monk's hands, enjoining him to

dispatch it at an early hour of the morning, and soon after withdrew.

"There's trouble ahead," muttered Monk, "unless I capture the girl again. She's not in the attics. I dare say she's got off. I'll have to send the telegram, for any treachery in regard to it would be speedily detected."

Soon after daybreak he left the house, and set out on his walk to the neighboring village. It was broad daylight when he entered the inn-yard and a stable-boy came forward to meet him.

"I want a fly to take me to Eastbourne," said Monk, abruptly. "How soon can you have it ready?"

"There's one here now ready to start, sir," replied the boy, "which it belongs to Eastbourne, and brought over a lady as wor vailed last night. The lady got out up the street, and told the driver to come here and wait for her, but she have give un the slip, and hasn't been nigh un since. And the driver are ravin' mad because he's to get no pay for the return trip."

"Ah!" said Monk. "I'll go back with him. The lady has given him the slip, has she? Is the fly ready to start this moment?"

The stable-boy replied in the affirmative, and conducted Monk into the stable-yard, where the vehicle in question was in waiting. The driver was buckling a last strap and swearing at his horse.

Monk entered into negotiations with the cabman, and hired the vehicle to convey him to Eastbourne, the stable-man not choosing to allow his horses to go out before their breakfast. Monk gave the cabman money for drink, and so loosened his tongue, and obtained a description of the lady passenger who had come over to Chetwynd on the previous night. The description, as he had expected, tallied with the appearance of Bernice.

But why had not Bernice returned to the villiage after her visit to the Park, and gone away in the cab? Had the Hindoo found and killed her? Or was she still in hiding at Chetwynd Park?

These questions occupied Monk during the journey to Eastbourne. He sent his telegram, and waited for an answer. As soon as it came, he engaged a hansom cab and set out on his return to Chetwynd Park, arriving home soon after the nine o'clock breakfast. He had his repast alone, and subsequently an interview in the library with Chetwynd, after which he went up to his sister's rooms.

Ragee was in attendance upon her mistress, but the Hindoo woman's head was bound up in her turban as in a bandage, and there were plasters on her face. She walked lame also, and Monk leaped to the conclusion that she had had a personal conflict with some one—probably with Bernice. He regarded the woman keenly, and detected a smouldering rage in her stealthy eyes, and he knew by that tigress look that Ragee had found her victim after the East Indian woman had parted from him. And if she had found Bernice, what then?

He went out from Miss Monk's room full of fears and tremblings and muttered, as he stole again to the lonely attics:

“Ragee found Bernice—that is clear. She must have killed her. But if the girl escaped her fangs, she's in hiding somewhere now, and I must get her away before the detective officer comes. What if he were to find her! Once get her safely out of the way, and I can defy him. My tracks are covered.”



CHAPTER XXIII.

THE YOUNG WIFE'S DESOLATION.

And where all this while was Bernice ?

Had the Hindoo woman really found and killed her, as Gilbert Monk was half persuaded ?

We related how she escaped by the private stair leading up from the garden entrance to the attics. She hurried on through the larger rooms, lighted by dormer windows, to a small dark chamber, in which was a light, movable ladder, communicating by an open trap-door with a low garret above. During her secret stay of weeks in the upper regions of the house, she had discovered this retreat, and had made use of it. It was not the great garret to which she had sent Gilbert Monk in quest of her effects, and she was convinced that he did not know of its existence. She climbed swiftly up the ladder into the garret, drew up the ladder, and closed the trap-door. Then she sat down in the dark and stillness, listening.

There came no sound of pursuit.

Breathing hard, like some wild hunted creature, Bernice waited until her heart had calmed its tumultuous beatings and her sense of hearing had become acute. Then she rose softly and produced from among the rafters a lantern and a match. She struck a light.

The room was very bare, with naked floor and rafters. There was no window, but the pale light stole in through chinks in the roof. There was quite a draught of air blowing. This room had been Bernice's most secret hiding-place, and there was still a small store of biscuits here.

Bernice groped among the rafters and took down her dressing-bag and travelling attire. She threw off her now draggled white silk gown with its torn lace, and rolling it up, thrust it among the crevices overhead. Then she hastily dressed herself in her neat gray costume, put on her hat and vail, and was ready to depart.

She lifted the trap door and listened cautiously.

After listening a long time she lowered the ladder to the room below. Then she crept down, and not waiting to hide the ladder, she crossed the attics and began her descent to the lower floors.

Stair by stair she descended, meeting no one. She reached the second floor in safety. Her heart beat like a drum. She hardly dared continue her descent, but equally she dared not linger in the house. She crossed the great upper hall like a shadow, and approached the private stair leading down to the garden entrance.

The private stair had been greatly used by Bernice while she had been mistress of the Park ; but it was not frequented by the servants, who had their own separate staircases. Bernice had, therefore, no fear of encountering any one upon it.

She stood at the upper landing a moment in hesitation. All was still below. There was no commotion in the household, no sounds of excitement or alarm. Breathing more freely now, she began the descent very slowly.

The stair was of the class known as boxed, the walls enclosing it on both sides. Bernice had descended half

way in the gloom, keeping one hand on the wall, when the door at the foot of the staircase opened, and the old East Indian woman, Ragee, bearing a candle high above her head, entered the stairway and began the ascent.

There was no friendly niche here for concealment. A sound of retreat would arouse the Hindoo's attention and precipitate discovery. Bernice shrank back against the wall, unable to advance or retreat, motionless as if paralyzed.

On came the old woman, her turbaned head bent, her weird and withered face in shadow, her clinging garments rustling without sound. Bernice experienced a very panic of fear. She crouched against the white wall, her wild eyes starting.

When the ayah had come midway of the stair, her level gaze suddenly rested upon the girl's feet, half-hidden in gray drapery.

She halted and looked up.

There was a moment of awful suspense. The ayah's stealthy eyes gleamed as she recognized young Lady Chetwynd. The brown hand that upheld the candle above her turbaned head trembled, and the light flickered. The other brown hand clenched itself, as if the long and bony fingers longed to strangle the crouching girl.

The two stared at each other in an awful fascination, Bernice's eyes dilating and burning like stars from out the pallor of her lovely face.

Then the ayah opened her shriveled mouth and gave vent to an inarticulate growl that might have come from the throat of a wild beast.

Bernice did not wait for words or actions. She saw in the ayah the spirit of Murder incarnate. She read aright the horrible look in those beast-like eyes—the

swift motion of the Hindoo's hand to her bosom, as in quest of a deadly weapon.

Without a cry, without a word, with a quick, unexpected spring, Bernice upraised her crouching figure, and darted down the stair, overturning the old woman and extinguishing the light. The ayah bounded from step to step like an India rubber ball, unable to arrest her progress or recover her balance, receiving those wounds and scars which Monk noticed on the following day. And before her coiled-up figure the young fugitive fled like the light, and darted out into the little dim, deserted hall below.

The garden door was still ajar, the butler not yet having made his rounds and closed up the house. Bernice flitted through it and was again out of doors, panting, trembling, and frightened. She sped across the garden, keeping to the shadows of the clumps of trees and shrubbery, and reached the park in safety. But still, as if pursued, she hurried on like some maddened creature.

Not until she was in the very depths of the park did she pause, and then she sank down in the midst of a little dark thicket in a secluded spot, and permitted herself to rest.

For hours she lay on the cool, dew-wet grass, in the densest gloom. She wept away all her tears. She wondered if the ayah would seek her here. She wondered if Gilbert Monk were at Chetwynd Park. Of course he would hear of her visit to her old home, but would he try to intercept her flight from Eastbourne? She thrilled with a sudden fear that he would go with her up to London, and take her again under his protection. Poor as she was, and dark as was her outlook into the future, she could not go back with him to Mawr Castle, and "compromise herself" by a life of dependence upon him,

who, being himself poor, could ill afford to support her.

"It is fortunate that I paid the driver of the fly that brought me from Eastbourne," she thought. "I cannot go back with him. Gilbert Monk will be at Eastbourne station in the morning. I must walk across the country to some other town, and go up to London by train. A ten-mile walk—and weak as I am, I can surely walk ten miles—will bring me to another railway station. I must start at once."

And so, at about two o'clock of the dark, chill morning, Bernice left the grand old park, and began her weary walk across the country. It was daybreak when she entered the village of Nunsgate, which she had visited often in her drives with Lord Chetwynd. She made her way to the station. The waiting-room was open, and Bernice shrank into a corner of it, and there remained, deeply veiled, until the express train came crashing in from Eastbourne on its way to London.

A guard put her into a ladies' coach, and the train resumed its swift progress along the line. So far Bernice was safe. She had escaped all perils attending her adventure, but how lonely she was! how heart-sick! how wretched! Never in her life had she felt more desolate than at that moment. It was as if the shadow of some gigantic evil in the near future had fallen upon her.

No adventure occurred to young Lady Chetwynd during her return journey to London, and she alighted at London Bridge station in safety. The morning was well advanced and the May day was bright with sunshine. Bernice drew her doubled gray veil over her face, took up her bag, and signalled a cab, which she entered. She gave the order, "Victoria Road, Kentish Town," and settled back upon the worn and grimy

cushions, and was presently being borne slowly over crowded London Bridge on her way to the distant suburb.

The drive was long and the young marchioness employed a portion of her time in studying the printed table of fares pasted on the inner wall of the vehicle, and making an anxious computation of the distance from London Bridge to her destination. Having settled the probable amount of her fare in her own mind, she drew out her pocket-book and emptied its contents in her lap. Her gold was all gone, and only silver and copper remained. Even at sixpence per mile, most of her small fund would be consumed in cab hire.

"I shall have but two shillings left when I arrive at my lodgings," she thought, "the month for which I pay my rent expires to-day. How am I to pay a week in advance? Mrs. Sharp has warned me that she will not trust me. But surely she will not turn me away penniless, friendless, and homeless. I will work for her; I know she will not refuse me a night's shelter while I make the last effort to find something to do."

She shivered a little, and was very grave during the remainder of her drive. The cab drew up before her lodgings at last, and Bernice alighted. She inquired the amount of her indebtedness, and the cabman named a sum that swept away all her small fund, except a solitary sixpence. She paid his demand, and ran up the steps of the old lodging-house, while he drove away in triumph.

Her loud knock upon the door was answered by the trim housemaid who had served her. Bernice greeted the girl with gentle courtesy, and essayed to pass on to the stair. But the housemaid, with unusual prim demeanor, interposed, preventing her ascent, and saying:

"Step in the drawing-room, Miss. Mrs. Sharp wishes to see you."

Bernice turned aside and entered the little drawing-room, which, even on that bright May morning, was chill and dark. She sat down in a chair near the grate, now filled with an array of gray-colored tissue paper, and waited with vague uneasiness for the appearance of the lodging-house keeper.

In the course of a few minutes a heavy step was heard in the hall, and Bernice arose to her feet as the door opened, and Mrs. Sharp entered the room.

The appearance of the landlady was far from reassuring. She looked more cold, angular, and severe even than usual. There was a forbidding frown on her brows, and a steely gleam in her hard, cold eyes that startled Bernice. Nevertheless the girl forced a faint smile to her sorrowful face, and held out her hand in a sort of faint imploring.

But Mrs. Sharp drew herself up in virtuous anger, and withheld her hand, her frown deepening. She looked the incarnation of respectability, and regarded Bernice as if the girl had been a leper.

"Well," said the woman, with a long breath, "so you are back again, Miss Gwyn? I did not expect you back."

Bernice looked bewildered. She knew of no cause for Mrs. Sharp's altered demeanor, and failed to comprehend it.

"I have not given up my room, madam," she said gently. "I could not have done that without speaking to you, of course."

"Indeed! Well, Miss, I'd have you know that this house is a respectable house, and prides itself on its high respectability. I ought never to have taken under my roof a young woman as could give no refer-

ences, nor no satisfaction as to where she came from. I'm rightly punished ; and I wonder, that I do, at your brazen impudence in coming back here," said Mrs. Sharp, severely.

"But what have I done? You treat me as if I had been guilty of some crime."

Mrs. Sharp met the gaze of the girl's brave brown eyes, and was staggered. The innocent child face, with its pure brows, its sorrowful mouth, its sweetness and nobleness, its half-haughty, half-pleading expression, made a sudden and strong appeal to her better feelings.

"Perhaps I'm wrong," said the woman, more quietly. "Only you must own, Miss, that it had a bad look, your slipping off so secret-like, yesterday—you that said you had no friends in Lunnon—and a staying off all night, and coming back at this late hour of the morning. And your taking your bag showed that your going was premeditated. I supposed that as your time here that you'd paid for was up, you'd got other lodgings perhaps, or—or that you wasn't what you seem to be. Have you got new lodgings?"

"No, madam ; I have no place of refuge but this."

"But you can explain your absence of last night, can't you?"

Bernice hesitated. The authoritative manner of the woman aroused her combativeness, and there was a shade more of haughtiness in her manner as she responded, calmly,

"I went down into the country last night, and have but just returned."

"You went to visit friends?"

"No, no. I have no friends there."

"Did you go to look for a situation?"

"No ; I went on business," said Bernice, wearily.

"Business! What business had you down in the country?" demanded Mrs. Sharp, incredulously.

"I decline to answer that question, madam. Surely you cannot require to know all my private affairs," said Bernice, her face flushing. "You do not communicate to me all your affairs, Mrs. Sharp, and you should not expect to know all mine."

"I'm not a young girl 'without references' and seeking lodgings, miss," said the lodging-house keeper. "I'm a respectable woman, and I can prove it. Do you come back here expecting to stay in my house?"

"Yes, madam. I—"

The grimness and hardness upon Mrs. Sharp's visage deepened.

"Do you refuse to explain your errand into the country, Miss?" she demanded.

"I must refuse."

"Is it a secret which you dare not tell? Is it connected with your past life?" inquired the woman, shrewdly.

Bernice was silent a moment, and then bowed assent.

Mrs. Sharp's "milk of human kindness" seemed to turn to vinegar at this acknowledgment.

"Of course, Miss, you've a right to your own secrets," she observed frostily. "I don't seek to intrude upon your confidence. I consider your room vacated. You can't impose upon me longer. Are you going?"

"But, Mrs. Sharp," pleaded Bernice, the full terrors of her situation dawning upon her, while still she strove to be brave and to retain her self-command. "I don't know where to go."

"Go where you went last night."

Young Lady Chetwynd's face whitened, and her slender figure trembled.

"I cannot go there," she said, "and I have no money."

"No money, while you wear a watch and chain, and a brooch ! You won't starve, Miss, although you pretend to be so dreadfully innocent," sneered Mrs. Sharp.

Bernice looked down at her watch and chain, gifts to her during the past year from Gilbert Monk. She had prized her watch for its usefulness, but had never thought of its monetary value. She supposed that Mrs. Sharp meant that she should sell her scanty store of jewelry, but she did not know to whom to apply in her emergency.

"Will you take my watch and let me have my pay in lodgings?" she asked, eagerly, with a flash of hopefulness.

"No ; I've told you I won't have you under my roof at any price," responded Mrs. Sharp, angrily. "Can't you take a plain answer? You've done yourself up with me, Miss Gwyn is your name, which I doubt—and you had better leave my house before I summon a policeman to fetch you out !"

The insult, uttered in a loud, threatening voice, had its effect. Bernice restored her empty purse and the sixpence to her pocket, bowed haughtily, and moved in silence to the door. Mrs. Sharp did not utter a word to detain her. Bernice passed out into the little hall, meeting the housemaid outside the drawing-room door, where the young woman had been diligently employed in listening, and hurried out into the street.

She was still dazed and bewildered. She could not yet understand why Mrs. Sharp had treated her with so much harshness and suspicion ; but at last, as a glimmering of the truth dawned upon her, her eyes flashed and her cheeks burned, and she walked on

swiftly, turning corners and increasing the distance between herself and Victoria Road, her heart swelling in a vain indignation.

"It will be as easy to find other lodgings as to find the first," she thought. "And I have my watch with which to pay my rent."

But without references, she could not find respectable lodgings. She hunted all day, without success. Night came on. Still she hunted for some place of rest.

Hour after hour she walked on. Rousing herself at last as from a trance, she started, hearing church bells chiming the hour of ten.

"So late!" she murmured. "I have walked since morning. Where am I to sleep to-night? Where am I?"

She stared about her, the aspect of the place in which she found herself seeming strange to her. She was in a dingy square pervaded by a foreign look and air. She was now too tired to go further, and so faint and hungry that she could think of little but food.

"I can go no farther," she said to herself. "I must sit down and rest. Ah, I am very tired!"

She sat down upon a door-step, and the glare of a gas lamp fell upon her face. She had thrown back her vail, and her pale face, pure as a star, shone in the full glare. A man came sauntering up the street. He kept in the shadows, as if he feared the police. He walked past Bernice, turned when he had passed her, looked back, and then approached her swiftly. He came up to her and seized her arm in a fierce grip, before Bernice had even noticed him.

"Ha! I've found you at last!" he ejaculated hoarsely. "It's Miss Gwyn!"

Bernice started back with a low cry of terror. Some-

thing in that evilly exultant visage thrilled her with strange fears. Monk had always treated her with respect and affection, and Mrs. Crawl and Flack had been respectful and attentive servants to her. She still regarded Monk as her best and only friend. Why, then, this strange and sudden horror of Monk's confidential servant?

She drew her arm free from Flack's grasp and said haughtily, yet not rising :

"You forget yourself. How dare you lay your hand upon me?"

"I beg your pardon, Miss," said Flack, humbly, sinking into the assumed character he had so long supported. "I did forget myself all along of the excitement of seeing you so sudden. Oh, Miss, where have you been so long? Mrs. Crawl is almost sick with grief. She and I are waiting here in London to find you. Our lodgings are near here. If you need money, Miss, she'll give it to you. If you want to be a governess, which Mrs. Crawl says you mentioned to her, she'll find a situation for you. You need not see Mr. Monk again, if so be you don't wish to. Only come with me to Mrs. Crawl in Lisle Street. Mrs. Crawl is just a ordering up her hot supper of stewed fowl and tea and toast," he added, artfully.

Bernice reflected. She had withdrawn herself from Monk's protection because he expected her to marry him in return for his kindness to her, but surely she might accept Mrs. Crawl's protection for a single night. She could not stay in the streets.

"I will go to Mrs. Crawl, but only for to-night," she said at last. "To-morrow I must look for something to do. Lead the way, Flack. I will follow you."

Had she refused to accompany him, Flack would have risked everything and carried her by force. Well pleased that she had fallen so readily and unsuspect-

ingly into the trap prepared for her, he led the way from the dingy square toward the neighboring street, where Mrs. Crowl and he had lodgings, and Bernice wearily followed him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

INVESTIGATING THE MYSTERY.

The answer from Scotland Yard to Monk's telegram had been to the effect that the superintendent would place one of his best men at Lord Chetwynd's service, and that the officer thus detailed would arrive at Eastbourne upon the following day by the morning express.

The young marquis had resolved that the real character of the detective officer for whom he had sent should be made known only to his most trusted friends, namely—Sanders and Gilbert and Sylvia Monk. He would not impart the secret even to the butler or the housekeeper, lest in some way it should transpire, and so defeat his object.

Accordingly he gave orders that a room should be prepared for an expected guest. And in order to prepare the officer for the rôle of guest, he ordered a carriage at a suitable hour upon the following morning, and drove over to Eastbourne to meet the detective, intending to fully enlighten him as to the cause of his own disquiet before the officer should arrive at Chetwynd Park.

He drove directly to the station, arriving just as the train steamed slowly in. He alighted and made his way to the platform, and surveyed the passengers as they stepped out from the coaches,

From one of the first-class compartments issued his recent travelling companion, the great explorer of Tartary, Mr. Basil Tempest.

Forgetting his errand at the station in his surprise, Chetwynd sprang forward with outstretched hands and hearty welcome.

"My dear friend," he exclaimed, "I supposed you had forgotten me. You are surely bound to Chetwynd Park, are you not?"

"I have run down unannounced to make you a little visit, my lord. I have borne your kind invitation in mind, but have not been able to accept it until now."

"You have given me a pleasant surprise, sir. I feel flattered that you have abandoned all the grand banquetings gotten up in your honor for a visit to me."

"I count Lord Chetwynd as one of my few friends," said Tempest, with a bitter smile, "and I am not such a prodigal as to forget a friend."

A little man, who had emerged from a second-class coach, and who had been wandering about the platform, questioning the station-master, now approached Chetwynd, raising his hat.

"Have I the honor of speaking to Lord Chetwynd?" the stranger inquired.

The marquis bowed assent.

The stranger, with a deeper inclination of his head, presented his lordship a card, upon which was inscribed :

.....
: MR. TOM BISSET,
:

: *Scotland Yard.* :
.....

The little man was the detective who had been placed at Lord Chetwynd's service, and was one of the shrewdest and most acute men in the force.

The marquis greeted him politely, and surveyed him with a sense of disappointment. He was a little, dapper fellow, very gentlemanly of demeanor; he was, in fact, of gentle blood, and had taken to his present calling from sheer love of it.

Despite his conviction that Mr. Bisset would be more ornamental than useful at the present crisis, Lord Chetwynd saw that the detective officer was a gentleman, and he treated him as such. He introduced him to Tempest, not making known his character, and conducted both his guests to the large open barouche which was in waiting. A minute later they were driving slowly through Eastbourne, on their way to Chetwynd Park.

"You are not looking so well as when I last saw you, my lord," said the great explorer, somewhat anxiously. "Your native air does not agree with you. You look harassed and worn, as if your days were full of anxiety and your nights sleepless."

"I may as well tell you the truth, Mr. Tempest," said the marquis, gravely, after a pause. "Perhaps your clear head, in conjunction with Mr. Bisset's shrewdness, may be of great help to me. We can talk freely—the old coachman is stone deaf; I chose him on that account for this morning's drive—and I have a conviction that I can unburden myself to you with utter unreserve. I came over to the station to meet Mr. Bisset, that I might have a long confidential talk with him before he enters my house, I am glad to admit you to our conference, Tempest. Mr. Bisset is a gentleman employed in the detective force. He comes from Scotland Yard."

Tempest looked surprised. Bisset appeared to him like a shallow Regent Street dandy. And why should Lord Chetwynd require the services of a detective officer?

"Have you been robbed, my lord?" asked Tempest.

The officer leaned forward with a faint show of interest on his beardless face. He supposed that he had been summoned to track out a robber, or discover some secret thief employed in the Chetwynd household, and had been by no means flattered at the task assigned him.

"No, I have not been robbed," declared Chetwynd. "I am enveloped in a strange mystery. I want that mystery solved for me."

"Of what nature is this mystery, my lord?" asked Bisset, with increasing interest.

"I must begin at the beginning," replied Lord Chetwynd.

He then rapidly sketched his visit to St. Kilda ; his falling in love with Bernice, their marriage, her death, and her repeated appearances to him since her burial. At the conclusion of the narrative, Chetwynd breathed heavily, his face ghastly pale, his blue eyes wild and strange in their eager wistfulness and yearning.

"A strange illusion," said Bisset, placidly. "I heard of a man once who fancied himself a tea-kettle, and was only cured of the delusion by being placed upon a hot stove. And you, my lord, believe yourself to be haunted ! The delusion is not unprecedented. A thousand men have deemed themselves haunted. By the by, the Miss Monk you mention is your lordship's betrothed wife, is she not?"

"Yes. We are to be married next month," replied Chetwynd, gloomily.

"It is desirable, then, that you should rid your mind of this singular delusion as early as possible," remarked Bisset.

"You have not heard all. You think me a monomaniac, I see ; but listen. When my wife last appeared

to me—the night before last—I pursued her. I bounded after her down the long aisles of the conservatory ; I grasped at her ; I caught her sleeve—”

“ Ah !” breathed Bisset.

“ And I tore from it this bit of lace, a real, tangible proof that the garments at least were not spectral. Look !”

Chetwynd took from his pocket a tiny packet, which being undone, was found to consist of a yellow, wrinkled, and torn scrap of old point lace.

Bisset and Tempest examined the lace with eager curiosity.

“ This puts a new view upon the matter, my lord,” said the detective, speaking no longer in a drawl, but in a quick, business voice. “ Your spectre was a living woman. How was she dressed ?”

“ In her burial robes—a long, white silk gown, cut square at the neck, with frills of lace like that hiding her fair bosom, and with sleeves cut off at the elbows and edged with lace. She has always appeared to me in the same dress.”

“ Hum !” said Mr. Bisset. “ Has any one else seen this white-robed angel beside yourself, my lord ?”

“ Miss Monk saw her, and believed her a ghost. No one else saw her. She comes and goes like a shadow. I believe her to be a living woman. But who is she ? But that I know Bernice to be dead— What is this mystery, Mr. Bisset ? I have sent for you to probe it.”

“ I should say, at first glance,” said the officer, “ that some young woman was trading upon her resemblance to the late Lady Chetwynd. There is no doubt, of course, that Lady Chetwynd is dead ?”

“ She died in my arms, and lay for six days in my house unburied, and I then consigned her to the Chet-

wynd family vault in the Chetwynd parish church," declared his lordship, solemnly. "And yet, Mr. Bisset, I can swear that that scrap of lace came from my wife's burial robe. The pattern is peculiar, you will observe."

"Had Lady Chetwynd much of this lace among her effects?" asked Bisset.

"None of that pattern except upon the dress in which she was buried. The gown was made for her in London."

"We'll look into the matter of this lace, my lord. Whoever is counterfeiting the dead Lady Chetwynd is doing so skillfully, without regard to trouble or expense, and consequently with an object. What that object is we must determine. Do you know of anybody who is averse to your marriage with Miss Monk?"

"I do not. My marriage with her is regarded as a matter of course," replied Lord Chetwynd. "I was engaged to marry her years ago, but she broke the engagement just before I went away on the cruise that resulted in my marriage to Bernice. My wife, in dying, urged me to marry again; and since my return, although I have not ceased in my love and fidelity to the dead, I have renewed my former engagement with Miss Monk."

"Hum!" said Mr. Bisset; and somehow he uttered the simple ejaculation in a manner that made it pregnant with meaning. "You must not deem me over-curious, my lord, but as you have desired me to assist in the solution of the mystery of Lady Chetwynd's sceptre, I must ask you to be perfectly frank with me, and to give me considerable information that will seem, perhaps, to have no bearing upon the matter in question. I must know every member of your household, servants and all. To begin with the chief personage next to yourself, my lord; who is Miss Monk?"

The marquis fancied that the officer's questions were growing intrusive, and he replied, coldly :

"She is my step-sister and promised wife. She is the daughter of my mother's second husband, Colonel Monk."

"Born in India, my lord?"

The marquis bowed with a suspicion of haughtiness.

"And her brother is here also, my lord?"

"He is, at present. He is reading law with Scotsby and Newman, of Chancery Lane."

"Hum! I know Scotsby and Newman," said Mr. Bisset, coolly. "Excellent firm. So Mr. Gilbert Monk is reading law with them? Thanks, my lord. And Mr. Monk, I suppose, was also born in India. I have a partiality for India and India people. I was born in India, my father being an officer of the East India Company. I was out there during my first ten years, and I've been back since attaining my manhood. I suppose I know as much of India and the natives as any man of my age living."

The carriage rolled on through the village and up the hill beyond, entering the shadows of the park, and soon reached the house.

The young marquis conducted his guest, Mr. Tempest, and the detective, Mr. Bisset, to the library. Here his lordship, at Bisset's request, recapitulated the story of Lady Chetwynd's spectre and the facts connected with its repeated appearances, submitting to be cross-examined even to the minutest details. The dandy-like officer dropped his little affectations of eyeglass and drawl, and listened with a keen interest, and exhibited a cool, calm judgment, a clear perception, and an acuteness and shrewdness that caused Lord Chetwynd to revoke his earlier opinion of him, and to respect and have faith in him.

"I am to pass as your guest, my lord, equally with your actual guest, Mr. Tempest," said the officer, when Chetwynd had given all the information in his power. "How many people in your house, my lord, know me in my true character?"

"Only Miss Monk, Mr. Monk, Mr. Tempest, and myself," was the response. "The housekeeper, butler, and under servants, of course, are in ignorance of your business here, of your name, even. They have been told that I expect a guest."

"Yet I wish that even Miss Monk and Mr. Monk knew me only as your guest," said the officer. "Men of my profession like to work in secret. Most ladies have a maid or confidential attendant to whom they impart a good share of their secrets, and these maids are sieves, for the most part. But to return to business. Will you take me to your conservatory, drawing-room, and music-room, and point out the exact spots at which the spectre—we will call your visitor a spectre for the present, my lord—appeared to your lordship?"

Chetwynd assented, and asked Tempest if he would accompany them.

"If you please," said the great explorer.

He led Tempest and the officer to the drawing and music-rooms, and pointed out the spots where Bernice had first and last appeared—how she had escaped pursuit, running down the aisle of the conservatory, and out of the open door. Mr. Bisset went over the ground carefully, and then said:

"My lord, I will undertake the solution of this mystery, but I desire you to leave the whole matter in my hands. Permit me to come and go about your house at will, to question your servants, to have a night-key to one of your outer doors, and to comport myself in all respects

as a rarely privileged guest, or as a member of your family."

"You may make your own terms, Mr. Bisset," said the marquis. "I resign the management of the matter into your hands."

His lordship showed his guests to their rooms, and a little later luncheon was announced. Miss Monk did not appear at the table, but Gilbert came in, boyish of aspect, with a jovial smile on his swarthy face, and a great affectation of light-heartedness in his manner. Chetwynd introduced his step-brother to his distinguished guest, and to the detective officer; Monk greeted them courteously.

Mr. Bisset had resumed his drawl and the use of his eye-glass. He appeared to Monk a mere dandy, whose skill in his profession was a matter of doubt, and Monk conceived a great contempt for him.

"Of course, Mr. Bisset," said Monk, at an early pause in the conversation, speaking with a slight tinge of superiority in his manner, as to a social inferior, "You have heard all about Lady Chetwynd's spectre? You are the gentleman from Scotland Yard, I take it, as Mr. Tempest is well-known to everybody, by name at least, as the great traveller and explorer. Chetwynd Park, although one of the grandest residences in England, has hitherto lacked that crowning charm—an authentic ghost. The deficiency appears to be supplied at last, and the Park may fairly be said to be haunted!"

The flippancy of this address, and the off-hand allusion to Lady Chetwynd, whose name the marquis could not yet hear without pain, surprised and disgusted Monk's listeners. He had meant to seem boyish and thoughtless, but he had in reality appeared coarse and heartless.

"Perhaps you can give me some information, Mr

Monk," said the detective, quietly. "Lord Chetwynd tells me that you were standing in the doorway of the conservatory looking out upon the garden upon the first night of the spectre's appearance, Mr. Monk, and yet you saw nothing of her."

"Nothing whatever."

Just then the butler opened the door and came in with a yellow envelope upon the salver, which he presented to Mr. Monk, saying, apologetically :

"A telegram, sir, which a mounted messenger has just brought over from Eastbourne, and says is to be delivered immediate, sir."

Monk took up the envelope and tore it open. It was dated at London that very morning, and had been delivered with commendable promptness. It was brief, containing these words :

"The runaway client has turned up. No harm has been done. All is well. The client will be held until you come. You can take your own time. The client not being well, cannot be removed under a week, and in the meantime you can feel assured that all is safe.

"SCOTSBY AND NEWMAN."

Monk read the message twice. It was from Flack, his trusted confederate, as he well knew. The form of the message he had himself dictated beforehand, in view of this emergency. He comprehended its meaning. Bernice was safe in the hands of Flack and Mrs. Crowl.

An evil joy and exultation flamed up into his swarthy face, and an evil gleam lighted up his small black eyes. Safe ! safe ! He could defy old Ragee and her hatred of Lady Chetwynd now. He could defy Bisset and all Scotland Yard. Bernice and his secret were safe !

Calming himself by an effort, he said to the butler :

"There's no answer. Here's a half-sovereign for the messenger. Send him to the Chetwynd inn to bait his horse, and tell him to have the bill charged to me. That's all."

He gave the butler a gold piece, and that functionary departed. Then for the third time Monk read his letter exultingly. He looked up at last with a sense of uneasiness, to find Bisset looking carelessly toward him.

"Have you good news, Gilbert?" asked Lord Chetwynd.

"Excellent news, my lord. It's a telegram from Scotsby and Newman, and on business, too. It announces simply that a little speculation I entered into a while since has turned out a success. And, of course, I'm rejoiced. One so impecunious as I am can afford to laugh even at small successes."

Monk crumpled up his telegram, thrust it in his pocket, and then gave himself up to a few minutes' meditation.

He did not deem it wise to proceed immediately to London. He desired to watch the movements of the detective officer, and to divert him if possible, from any approach to the truth. He feared that his departure on the very day of Bisset's arrival might draw the attention of the officer upon himself. As Bernice was safe in the hands of his allies, and not well enough to be removed to Mawr Castle, he could afford to wait a week before going on to see her. He felt it necessary to communicate with Flack and Mrs. Crawl immediately, and as secretly as possible.

Accordingly, directly after luncheon, he went to his own room to write a letter to his confederates.

Bisset excused himself, and wandered away by himself.

Lord Chetwynd ordered out a pair of thoroughbreds,

and with Tempest went out for a swift gallop through the park and over the estate.

Some two hours afterward Chetwynd and Tempest rode slowly through the village of Chetwynd-by-sea, and ascended the hill that led to the park. In advance of them a slender, gentlemanly figure was walking slowly, twirling in one gloved hand a small cane, or walking-stick, and smoking a cigar.

"It is Mr. Bisset," said Tempest. "He's been down to the village."

"What can he hope to discover by a visit at the village inn?" said Chetwynd. "He knows his own business, I suppose, however. I fancy that foppishness of his is a mask he likes to wear because his real nature, which he hides beneath it, is so different."

At this moment Bisset, who was still in advance of the riders, paused at the small lower gate of the park, and looked in. Gilbert Monk was in the very act of opening the gate, having a letter in his hand, which he was conveying to Chetwynd himself, instead of intrusting it, as was customary, to the butler and the post-bag.

Bisset stepped back, raising his hat to Monk, who thrust his letter in his pocket and came out, securing the gate behind him.

At this juncture Chetwynd and Tempest came up, and reined in their horses.

"I see that you have been over to Chetwynd, Mr. Bisset," said the marquis. "I fear I did not make it plain to you that the mystery of the spectre is known to but a very few, and to no one outside the Park, excepting Doctor Hartright of Eastbourne, the Chetwynd rector, and my bailiff. You won't get any light upon the matter in the village."

"I beg leave to differ with your lordship," said

Bisset, respectfully. "I have obtained light upon the mystery even in the village."

The three gentlemen uttered exclamations of surprise.

"I'm afraid you've permitted yourself to be imposed upon, sir," said Monk, with a sneer. "You would do better to concentrate your attentions upon the housemaids."

Mr. Bisset did not deign to reply. He raised his hat, and moving aside out of Monk's path, passed on. Monk went his way toward the village, and Chetwynd and Tempest cantered on toward the Park.

There was a strange smile on the Dundreary face of the detective officer as he daintily picked his way, and proceeded slowly in the direction the marquis and the explorer had gone.

"How Mr. Monk does despise me, to be sure," he said to himself. "He thinks me a fop of the first water, a regular swell, you know. But about this mystery—my interest in it grows upon me. I have not lost time since I came; of that I'm certain. And I think I've gained something like a clew that will lead me to success. Tom Bisset isn't in his dotage yet."

Whistling softly to himself, he passed in at the lodge gates and sauntered slowly up the avenue toward the mansion. Miss Monk was walking to and fro on the marble terrace, as was her daily custom. Bisset suspected her identity at once, and stepping back into a deeper shadow caused by the trees, he stopped to regard her.



CHAPTER XXV.

A VEXATIOUS INTRUDER.

Entirely unconscious of the keen regards of the detective officer, Miss Monk continued to walk to and fro upon the marble terrace, in the shadow cast by the great house.

Miss Monk was not happy. A haunting dread brooded upon her soul by night and day. Never for one moment did she feel safe. And now her disquiet was increased by thoughts of the new arrivals at Chetwynd Park, and more particularly of the detective officer.

"If it were not that Bernice lives and is at the Park—where else can she be?—I could defy even him," she thought. "Does Gilbert mean to let this detective spy out his secret and Lady Chetwynd's identity? I suppose he is not used to dine at a gentleman's table, and I shall fairly dazzle him with my beauty and splendor. I think I may as well be civil to the fellow, although I wonder at Roy's democratic way in treating him as a guest. I should like to meet the fellow before dinner, and before this great explorer Tempest appears, to claim my chief attention."

Fortune, as usual, seemed inclined to favor Miss Monk. The detective officer having studied the lady from

afar sufficiently, now emerged from the shadow of the avenue limes and approached the terrace at an easy, sauntering pace, swinging his light gold-mounted walking stick in one gloved hand, and twirling the curled ends of his scented moustache in the other. He wore his gold-framed eye-glasses, his tall silk hat, a dainty blue scarf with a huge diamond glittering upon it like a rain-drop in the sunshine, and his fashionably made garments were worn with the air of a Regent Street "swell." This the detective! Miss Monk knew instinctively that he was the detective officer, and not Mr. Tempest or a chance visitor, and her lips curled in contempt as strong and keen as Gilbert Monk entertained for him.

"He a detective!" she said to herself. "He's a doll—a mere figure-head, in love with himself. Or he's an amateur, sent to try his hand here and to learn his business. A child could hoodwink him!"

Still with that contemptuous smile on her face, Miss Monk continued her slow walk.

Mr. Bisset came up, meeting her squarely, and so arrested her steps, while he raised his hat and made her a Chesterfieldian bow.

"I have the pleasure and honor of addressing Miss Monk, I believe," said the detective, in his courtly manner, with a fashionable drawl.

Miss Monk drew herself up superciliously, and eyed him with a haughty stare.

"I am Miss Monk," she said, coldly. "You have the advantage of me, sir. I do not know who you are."

Mr. Bisset appeared in no way abashed at this repulse. He hastened to say, suavely :

"I am Mr. Bisset, Lord Chetwynd's guest, Miss Monk."

"The policeman?" said the lady. "Ah! I suppose I should have said the detective officer. I'm sure I beg

your pardon. You detectives are the aristocrats of the police force, as I understand it. No one would take you for a detective, Mr. Bisset," she added, more graciously. "You look like a gentleman."

"I am a gentleman, both by birth and breeding, Miss Monk," said the officer, quietly; "but unfortunately, money does not always accompany gentle blood. It became necessary for me to support myself, and I chose my present profession from sheer love of it. Nature intended me for my present place, and I find a great delight in it."

"Still, you must now and then find yourself baffled," said Miss Monk, graciously, yet considering the officer an insufferable egotist. "I suppose, now, Mr. Bisset—is that the name?—that in all your professional experience you were never called upon in a case similar to this? Until the night before last we have believed Lord Chetwynd to be a hypochondriac—the victim to a preposterous illusion or delusion. But now, of course, we know him to be the dupe or prey of some designing woman, who presumes on her resemblance to the late Lady Chetwynd to play spectre. The scrap of lace torn from the woman's sleeve shows clearly that it is no spectre, but an actual woman. She may have purposely allowed him to catch her sleeve the other night. She may intend to suffer him to clasp her next time. People work out their plans by strange ways sometimes. And Chetwynd Park is a grand prize to work for." And Miss Monk's gaze turned toward the house, and swept over the park and fields and farms spread before her like a picture.

"It is indeed a glorious prize," said the detective officer, but his gaze dwelt upon Miss Monk, and not upon the scene around him. He was regarding her with singular and flattering intentness. She turned

her half-averted face with the swiftness of a serpent, and as silently, and she met the full, admiring gaze of Mr. Bisset fixed upon her. He did not give her time to speak, saying, in his drawling voice :

“As you are so interested in the discovery of this mock spectre, Miss Monk, I know you will lend me all assistance in your power in my search for her. Can you give me an accurate description of herself and her dress?”

“I must refer you to Lord Chetwynd for information on those points, sir. I have never seen the woman,” asserted Miss Monk, adhering to her original denial, and without suspicion that her brother had declared that she had seen the supposed spectre, but had feared to own to the fact, lest she should strengthen Lord Chetwynd’s supposed delusion.

Mr. Bisset’s careless eyes began to concentrate their gaze upon the young lady.

“Pardon me,” he said ; “but did you not see the supposed spectre, either on its first or last appearance?”

Miss Monk replied in the negative.

“But Mr. Monk said you did see her.”

Sylvia’s face darkened, and a savage glitter brightened her eyes.

“Did he say that?” she asked, in a hissing voice.

“He did. He told Lord Chetwynd that you had seen the spectre on each occasion,” said the detective, coolly.

The savage look on Miss Monk’s face deepened. She crested her black head like a serpent about to dart upon its prey. Her breath came quick and hard. Her suspicion that Gilbert was playing against her seemed to receive additional confirmation. For the moment she hated her brother with a deadly hatred, such as must have once filled the soul of the first murderer.

She shivered a little, drew her cloak closer around

her, and resumed her slow walk, Mr. Bisset keeping pace beside her.

They had taken but a turn or two when the old East Indian woman Ragee came out of the house and strided swiftly toward them, with an Indian scarf thrown across her arm. Mr. Bisset watched her approach through his eye-glass.

"An odd person to find in prosaic England, Miss Monk," he said. "She looks like a figure out of the Arabian Nights."

"She is only my old ayah whom I brought with me from India," said the young lady. "She nursed me in my infancy, and is devoted to me."

Ragee came up at this juncture and presented the scarf to her mistress, begging her to throw it over her head, lest she should take cold. Sylvia complied with the request. The Hindoo woman cast a distrustful glance at the detective officer, and said, in a low voice, in the Hindostanee tongue :

"Beware, Missy. The butler has just told me that this is the detective. I made an excuse to come and warn you. He will try to worm out of you contradictory sayings. I like him not. He is not what he seems. I am afraid of him."

Miss Monk laughed, and the Hindoo woman reluctantly retired. There was a cloud on her dusky brow, and an anxious look in her eyes, as she retreated to the house. Some instinct warned her that this fair, foppish little fellow, with his affectations, his eye-glass, and his drawling accent, was more to be feared than any other.

"My ayah is a good old soul," said Miss Monk, in English, addressing Mr. Bisset, "but she seems to think me a delicate invalid who must be cosseted continually. She speaks little English, but usually addresses me in her own tongue. The Hindostanee is

as sweet and mellifluous as honeyed wine. All she had to say to me was, that I must guard against this insidious sea-breeze, and to remind me of an illness it once caused me, but you heard how the words rolled off her tongue in music. Ah, the Hindostanee is sweet to my ears. Its words were the first my baby tongue lisped, and I suppose I shall speak it last of all."

She sighed sentimentally, and her eyes gazed full into the detective's face.

"The Hindostanee tongue is mellifluous, as you say. Miss Monk," he remarked. "I like it. The Hindostanee was the first language I ever spoke, for, like you, I was born in India, had a native nurse, and my mother died in my first year of my life."

Miss Monk's dark face paled.

"You—you understand Hindostanee, then?" she said.

"Very well indeed," answered the officer, coolly. "I lived in India until I was ten years old. On reaching my majority I went back to look after some property left me by my father, and I remained there some five years studying the language and the people."

Miss Monk listened to this revelation in a dead silence. She comprehended that the officer had heard and understood Ragee's warning words, and anger and fear struggled together in her breast for the mastery.

"I must say," she declared, after a pause, "that your conduct in listening to my ayah's private communication to me is not what I consider honorable."

"I might retort that it is not considered good-breeding to use a foreign language before people who are believed not to understand it," said the detective, good-humoredly. "But, Miss Monk, no advantage will be taken of your ayah's warning against me. Her words are of little consequence either way. I had come to several conclusions before she appeared, and her

words did not affect those conclusions. Pardon me for having intruded upon you for so long a time, and accept my thanks for the assistance you have rendered me. I will now join Lord Chetwynd and his distinguished guest."

He raised his hat again with languid grace, walked away toward the house, and made his way to the grand old library. Lord Chetwynd and Mr. Tempest were seated at one of the tables poring over maps of China and Tartary. They looked up at Bisset's entrance.

"Come in, Mr. Bisset," said the marquis, with the courtesy that distinguished him.

"I have not now come to interrupt your visit with Mr. Tempest, but to ask you to place a saddle-horse at my disposal, I desire to absent myself upon this business for some hours. I may not be back until to-morrow morning."

"Take your own time, Mr. Bisset," responded the marquis. "Come and go at pleasure. Here is a night-key which you requested. I shall order one of my favorite horses to be saddled immediately, and it shall be yours while you stay here."

Lord Chetwynd rang the bell and gave the requisite order. Mr. Bisset waited until a servant announced that the horse was in waiting, and then took his leave, mounted, and rode down the avenue just as Miss Monk approached the house. He raised his hat to her respectfully, and rode on. In a few minutes he had passed out of the lodge gates, and was on his way to the village of Chetwynd-by-sea.

Mr. Bisset did not stop many minutes at the village. He rode into the inn stable-yard, and had a brief interview with a stable-boy, and then rode out again and pushed on to Eastbourne. He had secured the address of the flyman who had brought Bernice over to Chet-

wynd village, upon her last visit to the Park. On arriving at Eastbourne he sought out this flyman. He found the man communicative. In reply to his close questions he learned that a young veiled lady had hired the fly in question on the previous Thursday night, on the arrival of the down express. She had arrived on that train. The driver had not seen her face. She was slender, a mere slip of a girl, in fact, with a sweet low voice, a graceful step, and a gentle refined manner. The flyman was ready to swear that she was a lady. She hired him to take her to Chetwynd-by-sea, and wait for her there two hours, agreeing to return with him. He was not a man to take his beast for so long a drive at night without getting a double fare. He drove the lady to Chetwynd village. At the top of the street she had got out, bidding him drive on to the inn and wait for her there. That was the last he had seen of her.

"They say she meant to give you the slip," said Bisset, artfully; "that she is a farmer's daughter living out Chetwynd way, and offered you the return fare as a bait."

"She's no farmer's daughter," said the flyman, doggedly. "I'll swear to that. Why, she carried herself as proud as a queen. You could see she was used to servants. And she didn't offer me the return fare as a bait neither. She was a true lady, above lying, I'll be bound."

No further information was to be obtained from the flyman, but Mr. Bisset did not appear dissatisfied. He gave the man another shilling, and said :

"What's the next station that the express stops at?"

The flyman informed him, and the officer rode away, striking out briskly over the pleasant Sussex road on his way to Nunsgate. In less than an hour he rode up

to the little country station at which Bernice had booked herself for London. A train was expected presently, and the ticket agent sat in his office at the open window.

Mr. Bisset left his horse in charge of a lounge, and went into the station.

"Where to, sir?" said the agent briskly, as the detective's face darkened the window.

"Nowhere in particular," replied the officer, good-naturedly. "Have a cigar, sir? I wish to take the liberty to make an inquiry which you may be able to answer. Yesterday morning a young lady went up to London alone by train, and I am uneasy about her. To tell you the truth, sir, she went away quite secretly. Did she go from this station?—a young lady dressed in gray, with a double gray veil, and a gray hat and feather."

The ticket agent accepted the cigar, and responded:

"There was such a young lady at this station early yesterday morning, sir. I did not see her face, it being hidden by the veil. She seemed to me as if she had walked long, and was tired out. She went up first-class, ladies' coach, to London. Was it a runaway, sir?"

"Something like it," smiled Mr. Bisset. "Thanks. I am quite satisfied."

He returned to his horse, mounted, and set out on his return to Chetwynd Park.

"My business is concluded sooner than I expected," he mused. "I shall be back in time to dress for dinner. My excursion has been a success. The 'spectre' went up to London. 'First-class.' A lady evidently. 'Ladies' coach.' Modest, I should say."

He returned to Chetwynd Park, arriving in time to dress for dinner. Faultlessly equipped in dress coat, white cravat, embroidered shirt front and fine jewels,

and wearing his eye-glass he descended to the drawing-room.

After dinner the party returned to the drawing-room. Coffee was drank. Miss Monk played a brilliant operatic composition, and sung also. Mr. Tempest was induced to rehearse some of his adventures in foreign climes. The evening slipped away pleasantly. At eleven o'clock Miss Monk retired, and soon after Gilbert Monk, yawning over a story of life and adventure, and as anxious for an interview with his sister as she was anxious for an interview with him, also said good-night and retired.

Mr. Tempest arose to follow their example.

"Be good enough to remain a few moments, sir," said the detective, quietly. "I have something to say to Lord Chetwynd, and I believe his lordship has admitted you, Mr. Tempest, into his counsels."

Lord Chetwynd assented. Bisset went to the door, walking upon his toes, and listened. He locked the door and returned.

"I have ascertained, my lord," he said, in a business manner, "that the 'spectre' of Chetwynd Park arrived from London, at Eastbourne, on Tuesday night. She drove over to Chetwynd-by-sea in a fly, promising to go back some two hours later in the same vehicle. Becoming frightened at her near discovery by your lordship, she did not go back in the fly, but walked to Nunsgate, where she took, yesterday morning, the up express for London. She was alone throughout, having no confederates. She is young, well-bred, a lady, and was dressed in gray, and wore a double veil of gray grena-dine."

Lord Chetwynd and Mr. Tempest were alike surprised at this store of information gained in such a short period.

"I have reason to believe that the young lady has a den in this house, or confederates," continued Mr. Bisset. "For reasons of my own, I incline to the former theory. I believe that this 'spectre' does not carry to and fro her white silk grave gown, but leaves it here for use as wanted. She certainly changes her dress after her arrival here, and before she goes. The young woman who came to Eastbourne clad in gray, and went away from Nunsgate clad in gray, are the same; and I know to my own satisfaction, that she is the 'spectre.' Now she must have a dressing-room somewhere. She knows the house, as is proved by her appearance in your lordship's room. She would naturally have her dressing-room in this house, and as lonely a room as could be obtained. I desire to examine the garrets, my lord, and to be accompanied by your lordship and Mr. Tempest only. Can we go up to them unseen?"

Chetwynd replied in the affirmative, rang for the butler and ordered candles, which were brought and placed on the hall table.

"We will go now, if you choose, Mr. Bisset," said the marquis. "The house is still. I am impatient to learn if your theory is correct in every point, and also to examine the white robe, if it be in the house. I shall know if it be the one my wife wore, if we really find it. Come."

He brought in the candles and lighted them. Then he led the way up by the private stairs to the garret, Mr. Tempest and Mr. Bisset following him. Both his lordship and the explorer were anxious, trembling, excited, but Bisset was calm and unmoved, as one who marches on to a certain victory.



CHAPTER XXVI.

AN IMPORTANT DISCOVERY.

While Lord Chetwynd, Mr. Tempest, and Bisset, the detective, were investigating the attics of the great house for some vestige of the recent presence of the "spectral" visitor of Chetwynd Park, Sylvia and Gilbert Monk were arriving at a mutual understanding.

Miss Monk had proceeded to her own rooms on leaving the drawing-room. She had exchanged her dinner dress of gold-colored silk for her scarlet dressing-gown of Indian cashmere, embroidered heavily with gold. Her glittering topazes still swung in her swarthy ears. She was carelessly knotting a gold cord with tassels of bullion about her waist, when a knock was heard upon the door of her boudoir.

"It is Gilbert," said Miss Monk. "I know his knock. Let him in, Ragee."

The old Hindoo woman obeyed. Miss Monk followed her attendant into her boudoir just as Gilbert Monk was admitted. Ragee locked the door behind him.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Gilbert," said Miss Monk, ironically. "You have not been very brotherly of late. I have fancied, indeed, that you have avoided me. Won't you take a seat?"

"Thanks," said Monk, lazily, "I don't care if I do ;"

and he settled himself luxuriously in a stuffed lounging-chair. "I noticed that you wanted to see me. Besides, I have something particular to say to you. Where is Ragee?"

He looked around. The East Indian woman had curled herself up upon a pile of hassocks in a distant corner, and evidently intended to remain in the room throughout the interview. She scowled darkly back at Monk, with a shadow of menace in her stealthy eyes.

"What I have to say to you, Sylvia," said her brother, "is for your ears alone. You'd better send your woman away."

"You can say nothing that I am not willing my woman should hear," she replied, fiercely. "Ragee is fully in my confidence. She will remain."

"Oh, very well," said Gilbert, sneeringly.

Miss Monk crested her head forward upon her long neck as she cried out, with greater fierceness:

"Where is Bernice Chetwynd?"

Monk started and changed color. He had expected the question, yet when it came he was not prepared for it.

"Is she not in her coffin?" he asked, making a feeble attempt to recover himself.

"Ah, bah! Do you think to cheat me still? I know you, Gilbert Monk! I know that Bernice is alive! Where is she, I say?"

Monk's courage rose equal to the occasion. He had only a woman to deal with and that woman his own sister. He feared not to place himself in her power, since she was in his. He replied, in an easy tone:

"Lady Chetwynd is now in London."

A look of relief passed over Miss Monk's face.

"I had fancied her in this house," she said. "In

that case the detective would surely find her. Where is she, in London?"

Old Ragee pricked up her ears.

"I decline to tell you," said Monk, coolly. "She is safe, and I intend that she shall remain safe."

The Hindoo woman clenched her dusky hands, while over her withered face flashed a look of hatred that boded ill for the absent young marchioness.

"I suppose you rescued Bernice from her tomb sixteen months ago, Gilbert?" said Miss Monk, slowly.

"Yes," he assented.

"Was she buried in a trance?" inquired Sylvia, with apparent curiosity.

"It was a case of suspended animation," replied Monk, "produced by an Indian drug dealt out to Bernice by your own teacherous hands, Sylvia, and given to you by the hag yonder. You see, I know the whole truth. As you may have suspected since, I was hidden in your dressing-room all the time while you were concocting your diabolical plot against Bernice. I saw the contents of the secret draw in your Indian cabinet. I heard you plan your hopes, your whole infernal scheme with that she-demon yonder. Perhaps you may also have guessed that I took the advantage of your momentary absence from the room to change the globules you intended for Bernice. You planned that she should die. I arranged that she should die only in seeming."

"It is as I suspected. Where have you kept her?"

"That is my secret."

Miss Monk's eyes gleamed dangerously from beneath their heavy drooping lids.

"What was your object in rescuing her?" she asked.

"That is also my secret," smiled Monk.

"It shall be mine also, if I tear it from your heart!" cried Sylvia. "You intend to enrich yourself at my ex-

pense. You intend to wait till my marriage day, and then proclaim to Chetwynd that Bernice lives, and claim a munificent reward."

"You mistake my designs entirely. I had no such intention as this you attribute to me. If I can prevent it, Chetwynd shall never know that Bernice lives."

"You expect to keep her alive as a scourge to me, then? You mean to compel me to support you through my terror of her?"

"Not exactly. And yet I expect you to pay me a handsome annuity when you become Lady Chetwynd."

"I will pay you more when she is dead."

"But I intend that she shall live. The truth is, Sylvia," and Monk's swart face flushed. "I love Bernice. You have seen into what a superb beauty she has developed. I shall marry Bernice—she thinks that she is free from her marriage bond by reason of her pretended death and burial. And I shall swear her to secrecy concerning her past life. She is a very Puritan, and regards her word as other people do their oaths—as sacred. When she is actually mine, and you are likely to return to England, I shall take my bride away to some foreign country and there spend my days. I am not fond of England, and I should like to live in Austria. Neither Bernice nor I care for society. Give me a good income, an estate near Vienna, horses, servants, and a few friends, and I care for nothing more."

Miss Monk regarded her brother narrowly and searchingly. She saw that he was speaking the truth, but yet she was not satisfied.

"You had no such design as this, Gilbert," she said, "sixteen months ago. You did not rescue her from the tomb because you loved her. All this love and thought of life with her in a foreign land is of later date. Why, then, did you rescue her from death? Why did you

seclude her and educate her? You must tell me why."

"I have no objections to so doing," said Monk, easily. "The truth will do no harm. I have discovered, through my connection with Scotsby and Newman, the secret history of Lady Chetwynd. You remember that there was a mystery about her birth. She was abandoned by her father, a wealthy gentleman, who took her to St. Kilda in his yacht, and left her on that distant island in the care of Minister Gwellan and his wife, who brought up the waif as their own child. The father never came for her. Now I happened to discover who she is, and the knowledge inspired me to act as I have done."

Miss Monk's brows were knitted, her swarthy face colorless and gray, her manner troubled and annoyed.

"You know who Bernice is!" she ejaculated. "You have known all this while? I never gave you credit for such depth, Gilbert. Who is Bernice?"

"That I cannot tell you. I reserve a few of my secrets for my own especial profit."

"Is she an heiress!" asked Miss Monk, frowning.

"It is highly probable. I am not one to bestir myself for a pauper. By-the-by, how about *your* marriage settlements."

"They are being drawn up by the family solicitor. Lord Chetwynd treats me most magnificently. My yearly income will be something grand, but then Chetwynd can afford it. He's rich to embarrassment, you know."

"Yes, I know," said Monk, arising from his chair and holding out his hand to her in token of amity.

"You can depend on me," he said. "We will both feather our nests handsomely. And now, Sylvia, I must go. I fancy I hear steps on the floor above."

That confounded detective may be prowling about. I mean to keep my eye on him henceforth. If he's spying, I may as well get to my own room."

Again he approached the door. Old Ragee looked at her mistress significantly. Miss Monk nodded. The Hindoo hastened to open the door. Without a look at her, Gilbert Monk strode out into the hall, and the door closed behind him.

Ragee shot home the bolt in the lock, listened to his departing steps, and faced her mistress.

"What is to be done?" questioned the Hindoo, in a whisper. "Is it an alliance, Missy?"

"No—a war to the death!" said Miss Monk, in her fierce sibilant voice. "I am not safe while Bernice lives. She will never consent to marry Gilbert. She adores Roy Chetwynd. She has plans of her own. She plays the ghost here to frighten me. She means to reveal herself in time to Chetwynd. She is duping Gilbert. She means to be revenged on me. I tell you I'm standing upon a sleeping volcano. I am not safe. The girl must die!"

"Aye, she must die!"

"When the detective leaves, Gilbert will go to London to see Bernice. You must follow him. You must track him to her. Find her, and let her not escape you the third time," and Miss Monk's eyes flamed with her murderous meaning. "Be as secret as death, as cruel as the grave. Remember, it is my safety you are fighting for."

The Hindoo nodded assent with an evil smile.

And now we will see how Bernice was faring. Her meeting with Flack seemed opportune. She resolved to spend the night with Mrs. Crawl, and to resume her search on the following day for something to do, and somewhere to stay.

Mrs. Crowl was in the act of sitting down to her supper, when Flack arrived with Bernice. She sprang up with a gurgling cry of joy.

"Sit down here," she said, pushing forward a chair. "You look tired, Miss Gwyn."

Then hastily removing Bernice's hat, she brought a cup of hot, strong tea. The girl took it eagerly and sipped it, feeling a pleasant warmth begin to diffuse itself throughout her system. Mrs. Crowl brought her also buttered toast, and little was said until young Lady Chetwynd had eaten, and a dash of color had come to her cheeks and the old brave light to her brown eyes.

"There, you look better now," said Mrs. Crowl, setting down the empty cup. "Won't you have a bit of Welsh rabbit or a chop?"

"Thank you, no," replied Bernice. "I want nothing more."

She put out her hands toward the blaze of the fire. Mrs. Crowl saw how thin the hands were, and how thin also the pale young face. She saw, too, under the girl's pallor and weakness, the strength of an awakened spirit, of a grand and noble courage, of a brave and spirited nature. Bernice had suffered greatly since Mrs. Crowl had last seen her, but this suffering had been like the fire which tries the gold, and she was to-night, despite her weakness and poverty and friendlessness, a brave, strong-souled, clear-headed woman.

Flack retired to his garret. Mrs. Crowl cleared away the remains of supper, and a bed was improvised upon the dilapidated sofa for her use. The bed in the adjoining room was re-made, and Bernice retired to the room with a candle. Mrs. Crowl had carefully refrained from asking questions of the young lady, exhibiting a delicacy for which Bernice was grateful.

Bernice did not lie awake to meditate upon her adven-

tures or prospects. She dropped asleep almost immediately. And then Mrs. Crowl crept into her room and examined her pocket-book, discovering the solitary three-pence that comprised Bernice's shield against starvation.

"She has no money to escape on again," muttered the woman. "It will be a long time before her funds are increased."

She took up the light and bent over the sleeper a moment, and then withdrew.

Mrs. Crowl was astir early in the morning. Bernice attempted to rise, but found herself too weak and tired and footsore. The woman brought her tea and toast, and afterward beef tea, and about noon young Lady Chetwynd appeared in the outer room, with her hair floating over her shoulders and attired in her travelling dress.

Mrs. Crowl brought a tempting luncheon to her guest, and Bernice partook of it. When she had finished she said, gratefully :

"I thank you for all your kindness to me, Mrs. Crowl, and perhaps some day I may repay it. I do not like to encroach upon your hospitality another night, and yet I am hardly able to go out to-day in search of a lodging or situation as governess."

Mrs. Crowl was very attentive to her young guest during the remainder of the day and evening. Lady Chetwynd retired early, and slept well. The next morning she arose early, herself once more.

She came out to breakfast, and was waited upon with due respect by Mrs. Crowl. After the meal Bernice went into the bed-room, packed her travelling-bag, and put on her hat. She came out ready for departure.

"You have been very kind to me, Mrs. Crowl," she said, extending her hand. "I am strong enough to

resume my search for work. I cannot remain here longer. I thank you again and again, and some day I hope to reward you."

She held out her hand, and Mrs. Crowl grasped it with a lingering pressure. Bernice moved toward the door. Mrs. Crowl, who had been standing before it, moved aside with an odd smile. Bernice essayed to open the door. It was locked.

"What does this mean?" she demanded, her eyes flashing.

"It means, Miss," retorted the woman, "that you are a prisoner."

Bernice stood amazed, indignant.

"Open this door!" she commanded, her sweet voice ringing. "Open it, or I will alarm the house!"

"Do—and see what you'll get by it. The lodgers, except us, are all men, away for the day. The landlady is my friend and relative, and will stand by me. Scream—yell—shout. You'll not alarm so much as a fly. You are a prisoner, Miss, and you may as well understand the fact first as last."

CHAPTER XXVII.

BISSET STARTLES LORD CHETWYND.

Lord Chetwynd, Mr. Tempest, and Bisset, the detective officer, while pursuing their object of searching the unused attics of the house, had gone from room to room, with their candles held high above their heads, examining every nook and corner, and finding only bare walls and dusty floors. The young marquis had not

been sufficiently sanguine to hope to find under his own roof some vestige of the recent visit of the Chetwynd "spectre." Mr. Tempest betrayed a keen anxiety, but he also had no hope of receiving enlightenment in regard to the mysterious visitor whose declared resemblance to Bernice—his unowned daughter—thrilled him with a desire to see her. Bisset, alone of the three, was cool and thoroughly self-possessed. He led the search, and his keen glances penetrated every niche and nook, and he stopped to examine footprints in the dust covering the floors with a deliberation and patience that annoyed his companions.

"You'll make nothing of these footprints," said Lord Chetwynd impatiently, as Bisset took out a foot-rule from his pocket and proceeded to measure one track in its length and breadth, and to note the measurements in his private note-book. "Some servant may have rambled through these rooms. That is the print of a man's foot, is it not?"

"Yes, my lord," said Bisset, briefly. "Such small items as this sometimes don't come amiss in my profession. And these measurements may be of service to me hereafter. Let me go in advance, that I may measure any other tracks before our own confuse them."

He went on in advance. The first footprint he had measured was that of Gilbert Monk. He presently found another distinctly defined—the footprint of the Hindoo woman, Ragee.

There was no heel mark to this print. The shoe had been flat and wide, and Bisset knew at a glance, with his shrewd, trained faculties, who had worn it.

"I begin to see light," he thought. "Everything goes to confirm my theory, preposterous as that theory seems. Monk is the author of the man's footprint; the Hindoo woman is the author of this one. I have caught

glimpses of a third print, but so confused with these two that it cannot readily be distinguished. If I could but come upon a clear impression of the third foot."

The wish was soon gratified. He found distinctly set in the heavy layer of dust the impression of a girl's slender, delicate, highly-arched foot ; and now his face flushed, and a tinge of eagerness came to his manner, as he said :

"We will go on, if you please."

They continued their investigations. And at last, in the very last room they visited, they came upon the ladder which Bernice had left leaning against the trap-door of the low upper garret which she had made her haunt.

Bisset's eyes gleamed as he beheld the ladder. He sprang forward and climbed up the rounds like a cat, and was in the upper garret.

Something in his manner infected Chetwynd and Tempest with like energy. They came after him up the ladder into the upper room.

It was only a low garret, barely six feet high in its highest part, without windows, a mere den, lighted and ventilated through seams and crevices in the slated roof.

And yet it was seen at the first glance to have been the haunt of a human being.

There was a mattress in a corner, a pillow, and blankets. A bit of broken mirror was affixed to a rough-hewn post. There were a few toilet appurtenances that had evidently been brought up from a guest-chamber below.

"Some one has been here," said Tempest, wonderingly. "And by the perfect neatness that reigns here, I should judge the inmate had been a lady."

"She stayed here for weeks at a time," said Bisset quietly. "See here."

He pointed out in a corner remnants of food, bones of fowls, a box of biscuits, and other edibles. The gentlemen examined them curiously.

"Do you think, Mr. Bisset, that the person who has lived in this room is the same who has performed the part of Lady Chetwynd's spectre?" inquired Mr. Tempest, with anxious interest.

Bisset replied in the affirmative.

"She must be demented," said the young marquis, thoughtfully.

Bisset did not reply. He was flashing his light to and fro high above his head, and darting his inquisitive glances hither and thither. The gleam of something white—a mere roll or bundle—behind a beam overhead caught his eyes. He seized it and pulled it down. It unrolled, and its silken length fell upon the floor.

It was the burial robe of Lady Chetwynd.

The three gentlemen stared at it for a full minute in silence.

"That is the robe my wife was buried in!" said Lord Chetwynd, in a strange voice. "I should know it anywhere. And it is the dress worn by the spectre. Look at the sleeve!"

Bisset lifted into plainer view the small elbow sleeve with its frill of rare point lace. Part of the lace had been forcibly torn out. The officer produced the fragment of lace which Lord Chetwynd had given him, and fitted it to the original frill. The fact was apparent at a glance. The fragment had been torn from that very frill.

"Was there no other mark upon her ladyship's gown, besides the pattern of the lace, by which your lordship might identify it?" the officer asked.

"No—yes. Upon the evening after our dinner party, as Lady Chetwynd and I stood in her boudoir,"

replied the marquis, "the ornaments upon my watch chain became entangled in the lace on the inner side of her sleeve. Our attempts to detach the ornaments resulted in a rent in the lace, an odd little zig-zag rent, which Fifine, Lady Chetwynd's French maid, repaired the next day. I have never thought of the incident since, until now your question recalls it."

"We can soon prove then, if this be her ladyship's gown," said Bisset. "Look!"

He displayed the inner side of both sleeves. Lord Chetwynd examined both, and uttered a strange cry, starting back.

He had found the little rent he had described, but so carefully darned as to be imperceptible save to the closest scrutiny.

Blisset and Mr. Tempest examined it narrowly.

"This is incredible," said the explorer, in sudden agitation. "Are we to understand that this is actually and truly Lady Chetwynd's burial gown?"

"It is proved by his lordship to have been Lady Chetwynd's robe, worn on her first evening in this house," said Bisset. "But it is not yet proven to have been the gown in which she was buried."

"But it is the same," declared the marquis—"the very same. She was buried in this gown—I'll swear to it. She looked in her coffin like a bride. She had no other white silk gown cut square in the neck, and with sleeves like those. Ask Miss Monk. She knows and will tell you."

"Let us not drag Miss Monk into this business of investigating, my lord," said Bisset. "I prefer to keep Miss Monk in ignorance of our movements. Is there no other who can identify the gown?"

"Lady Chetwynd's French maid Fifine. She lives in London. I have her address somewhere."

"Very well. We will apply in due time to Mademoiselle Fifine," declared Bisset. "But to go on with our work here. Your lordship has proved conclusively that this gown belonged to Lady Chetwynd. Your lordship also believes this gown to have been her ladyship's burial robe. You will be shocked, my lord, at my next proposal, but a moment's reflection will assure you of its propriety. I desire, in your lordship's presence and the presence of your distinguished guest, Mr. Tempest, to open Lady Chetwynd's coffin."

Lord Chetwynd started. The idea seemed sacrilegious. His stern, agitated face expressed his refusal.

The explorer looked scarcely less agitated and amazed.

"This is a most singular proposal, Mr. Bisset," said Tempest endeavoring to recover himself. "Why should you seek to disturb the remains of the dead? I cannot wonder that Lord Chetwynd refuses to grant your request. I think I never heard so strange a proposal in my life."

"But these are strange circumstances in which we find ourselves, sir," said Bisset, respectfully. "There is a fair share of probability that this gown was worn by Lady Chetwynd in her coffin. How, then, did it come out? I dare not as yet declare to you all my suspicions. What shall I say to you, and not betray too much? Have you never heard of people being buried in trances? Have you never heard of cases of suspended animation? Why should not Lady Chetwynd have been the victim of catalepsy? Suppose she were buried in a trance?"

"It is not possible," cried Tempest, in an agony. "How can it be? She was not buried for six days."

"There are well-authenticated instances where animation was suspended for a week, or even so long as ten days," declared Bisset calmly.

"But she was dead, I tell you," said Lord Chetwynd

brokenly. "Ah! there was no mistake in that fact. She died of fever contracted in the cottage of a poor tenant. She knew that she was dying. She bade me good-bye. And when she had died her eyes became sunken, and the look that the dead have mantled her face. There was a strange blueness about the poor, pinched face—"

He broke down sobbing.

Bisset started eagerly.

"A blueness, my lord?" he ejaculated. "For Heaven's sake go on. Did this blueness settle most heavily under the eyes and about the mouth?"

"Yes, yes. It changed her, giving her a ghastliness that haunts me still."

Bisset communed with himself for some moments. Evidently Chetwynd's words had produced a vivid impression upon him. At last he spoke:

"My lord, your words but confirm my desire to look within Lady Chetwynd's coffin. There is a state of trance characterized by the peculiar blueness of the visage you have described. I cannot tell you more yet, but before God I swear I will lay bare before you, before I shall have relinquished your service, a story that will thrill you with horror. I believe, so help me God, that Lady Chetwynd was in a trance when she was buried."

Chetwynd reeled, his bronzed face becoming white.

"Ah, what!" he gasped. "You believe that she—my wife—my little Bernice—died there in her coffin, while I was weeping and mourning for her here?"

"No, no. You do not comprehend me entirely. She was buried alive—"

Tempest echoed the words with an anguished groan.

Chetwynd put up his hands as to ward off a blow. He could not speak.

"I repeat," said Bisset, and the flickering candle-light

fell full upon his earnest face, "that Lady Chetwynd, in my opinion, was buried alive. I believe that, for purposes of greed, or other purposes, she was rescued from her tomb—"

"Rescued!" cried Chetwynd, in a quick, hollow whisper.

"Whether she arose from her coffin in her right mind or not, I cannot yet determine," pursued Bisset. "But that she arose from her coffin I am fully persuaded. I believe that she lives—"

Chetwynd retreated to the wall. He seemed about to faint, but his blue eyes burned with a wild and awful fire, and the ghastliness of his face deepened.

"Shall I go on?" asked Bisset, with an anxious glance at the marquis. "I believe that Lady Chetwynd lives. I believe that it was your own wife you have seen so repeatedly, my lord. I believe that Lady Chetwynd's spectre is Lady Chetwynd's living self!"

The words of Bisset as he thus declared his belief in the continued existence of Lady Chetwynd, burned like coals into the hearts of his two listeners. Both Chetwynd and Tempest stood like statues, motionless, dumb, frozen in an awful horror. The words of the officer seemed wild and heartless. Lord Chetwynd rallied, and said:

"After what has been said here to-night—preposterous as it seems—I shall never know a minute's peace, day or night, until I have examined my poor wife's coffin. I know not what to think. Of course my wife is dead in truth, but I cannot rest until I know that her bones lie in the coffin in yonder parish vault. I must know this very night—within the hour. Mr. Bisset will, I know, accompany me. Mr. Tempest, will you go, also?"

The explorer bowed assent. Indeed, he longed with

a feverish anxiety to prove whether Bernice were dead or no.

"We will go now," said Bisset, promptly. "Our researches here are ended. Come!"

He gathered the silken robe, all stained and frayed and yellowed and wrinkled as it was, across his arm, and led the way from the attics to the lower floor. Upon the third floor they halted to listen.

"We must be on our guard," said Bisset, in a whisper. "I do not wish Mr. or Miss Monk to become aware of our proceedings. It is well to be as secret as possible in a case like this."

The three men moved cautiously toward the stair.

As they halted a moment near the landing, listening, Gilbert Monk's head appeared above the level of the floor. Monk was struck, at the first glance, by the countenances of the three men whom he thus met face to face, and he stood aghast at sight of the burden one of the three men bore. That burden was the silk gown in which Bernice had so successfully played the part of spectre, and it was still flung across the arm of the detective officer.

Monk stared speechless. He comprehended the scene at a glance. He had not calculated that the robe of Bernice would be found, yet in his amazement his desperate courage did not forsake him.

"Ha, what have you there?" he asked, finding his voice under the keen scrutiny of Mr. Bisset. "The spectre's gown, I'll risk a guinea. Have you found the spectre herself in *propria persona*?"

"No, Gilbert," said Lord Chetwynd; "but we have found evidence that the mysterious girl, whoever she may be, has inhabited an attic in this house for days and weeks."

"Indeed," said Monk, coolly. "I shouldn't have slept

so sound of nights if I had suspected that. For, to tell the truth, I fancy the creature is demented."

"We have made other discoveries, also, Mr. Monk," said Bisset, eying Monk sharply. "We found foot-prints in the dust of the attic floors. I measured them, and have come to some valuable conclusions."

"Such as—"

"I keep my conclusions to enhance the glory of my final announcement," declared Bisset, with exasperating indifference. "We shall see what we shall see. But permit us to pass, Mr. Monk."

Monk bowed courteously, and stood aside until the three gentlemen had reached the floor next lower. He then followed them.

Arrived upon the chamber floor, Lord Chetwynd took the silken robe from Bisset and carried it into the dressing-room Lady Chetwynd had occupied, and locked it in an armoire. He returned to the hall, where Tempest and Bisset awaited him, and Monk with them.

His lordship glanced from Bisset to Monk, who saw that some further movement was on foot, and was determined to engage in it.

"I presume your investigations are not yet ended," said Monk, in his boyish way. "Is anything more in contemplation? If so, let me help also. Four are better than three. It is not like Chetwynd to count me out, when I would do anything to serve him."

Chetwynd was touched by the implied reproach. Frank and honest himself, he believed Monk the same. He trusted him, and entertained a species of affection for him.

"It is true, Gilbert, that we have another movement on foot," he said. "Mr. Bisset thinks that we ought to investigate my poor wife's coffin. We are going to do now."

Monk did not change color. He had scarcely expected that an investigation would actually be made of Lady Chetwynd's burial casket, but he was prepared for that investigation. Bisset marked that not a muscle quivered in that boyish, bearded face, that the small black eyes did not blench, and that the swart face did not change in its expression of curiosity and surprise.

"The fellow is a devil," thought Bisset. "But I have dealt with devils before, and I'll conquer this one—or die!"

His sentiments, however, were not betrayed in his manner. He waited for Monk's answer.

"Let me go with you," said Gilbert Monk, with an earnestness in which seemed no shadow of terror or anxiety. "By Jove! But it's odd, you know. Opening a coffin! I suppose Chetwynd has a right to do it, and I'd like to be present at the opening. I loved Bernice as if she were my sister, and if there's anything wrong, I want a hand in helping clear it up."

"Come, then, Gilbert?" cried Chetwynd. "We must go down to the library for the keys. We will disturb Sylvia if we linger here."

Monk looked down at his clothes.

"We are all in dress suits," he said. "We must put on warmer garments before we venture out. The air is chilly."

The suggestion, so eminently practical, had not occurred even to Bisset. The gentlemen acted upon it, each going to his own room.

Some ten minutes later, dressed in morning costume, the four met in the library.

Chetwynd opened the safe, and produced the key of the Chetwynd family vault, also the key of the door at the head of the stairway leading down into the crypt.

"We must get the key of the church of the rector," said the marquis. "I have here under my cloak a lantern and a few tools which we shall require. Are you ready?"

Assent was given, and Chetwynd led the way. They walked swiftly and in silence to Chetwynd parish church. The gate was unlocked, and Monk led the way in among the graves.

"Wait for me in the porch," said Chetwynd. "I am going to arouse the rector and obtain the key of the church."

He soon returned, and Mr. Locke, the rector, accompanied him.

The church was opened, and the five gentlemen gave themselves admittance and proceeded down to the Chetwynd burial vault.

The lantern was suspended from a nail in a beam overhead.

Then Bisset went to work. He took possession of the tools Lord Chetwynd had brought, but first of all he surveyed the coffin on every side, to ascertain if it had at any period since Lady Chetwynd's burial been tampered with.

To all appearance, it had not been touched.

It stood upon trestles, and was covered with black crape, upon which the silver plate and handles, all tarnished now, gleamed with subdued lustre. Bisset read the inscription on the plate.

Then he set to work to unfasten the screws. Tempest, seizing a screw-driver, set to work upon the opposite side of the casket. Lord Chetwynd stood apart, his arms folded, his head sunk low on his breast. Monk and the clergyman conversed in whispers.

The lid of the coffin was unscrewed and removed.

And now all but Chetwynd gathered around to look into the casket,

Bisset uttered a low exclamation, unintelligible to all save Monk, who put up his hand to his mouth to hide a smile of triumph.

The coffin was not empty. Within it lay the skeleton of a woman. The grinning skull was bare of flesh ; the long black hair had grown like some wild weed and filled the upper half of the casket ; and the fleshless hands and delicate fingers, mere bones now, still hung together as if strung on wire.

But strangest of all, the fleshless skeleton was mostly covered by a long gown of white silk trimmed with point lace, and cut square in the neck, with elbow sleeves edged with frills of lace. The silk was stained and yellow, as if it had lain there all these months, but was still in a good state of preservation.

Monk, not satisfied with the precautions he had before taken, had caused a dress to be made ; a counterpart of Bernice's burial robe, had stained it purposely to make it look old and decaying, and had recently placed it here in anticipation of this moment.

And now his heart throbbed with sinister joy at his success.

Lord Chetwynd came forward and also looked into the coffin. The others drew back respectfully. There were no tears in his eyes, but his face was convulsed with his awful anguish. His old wound was ploughed up afresh, and the pain was almost more than he could bear.

He looked a long time in silence. Then he said, brokenly :

"The body of my wife lies here. This is her dress. See, the lace is the same—no, not the same, yet very like it. We have deceived ourselves."

He stepped back with arms still folded, his head sinking again to his breast.

In silence the lid was restored to the coffin and screwed in its place. The old clergyman approached Chetwynd and took his hand, but he had nothing to say in such a moment and to a despair like this.

And in silence the five gentlemen returned to the church porch. Mr. Locke took his key and went home. The others returned to Chetwynd Park.

"So far, Monk is ahead," thought the baffled detective, as he retired to his bed. "He's crafty as the devil. It's likely to be a tough fight between us—a contest of wits; but I'm not worsted yet, and so surely as God lives I'll come out ahead in the end. And the end is near!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE INVESTIGATION CONTINUES.

Mr. Bisset on opening Lady Chetwynd's coffin, had expected to find it empty. He had looked for a triumphant vindication of his theories, but had experienced only an absolute defeat. He had arrayed himself in a secret conflict with Gilbert Monk, and Gilbert Monk had come off victor.

Mr. Bisset was too well convinced that he was right, too astute, too shrewd, too skilled in tracking out mysteries, to recede from the opinion he had already formed.

He was persuaded that the bones he had seen in the coffin were not the bones of young Lady Chetwynd, but that they had been recently placed there by Monk. He was convinced that the silken gown he had seen in

the coffin was not the gown that had been worn by the youthful marchioness, but one that Monk had caused to be made in imitation of it.

But how to prove this theory? How to unveil the truth? How to entrap to his own destruction a man whose cunning and sense of caution were something marvellous?

He was up at daybreak, and soon after made his way out to the stable-yard. The stable-men were astir, and an air of bustle pervaded the place. Bisset ordered his horse, mounted, and rode away at a canter upon the road to Nunsgate. Arrived at that station, he found an early loungee to take charge of his horse, and sauntered into the telegraph office. The hour was now about seven; the operator was just entering his office. Bisset followed him.

"I want to telegraph to London, Scotsby and Newman, Chancery Lane," he said, languidly. "All ready? Send this message, then: 'Did you telegraph to Monk yesterday?' That's all. Oh, add the address to which the answer is to be sent. 'Address Bisset, Chetwynd Park, Eastbourne, Sussex.' How much?"

He paid for the telegram and sauntered out again. He mounted his thoroughbred and rode swiftly back to the Park, arriving in time to make his toilet for breakfast.

After breakfast Miss Monk retired to her boudoir and the contemplation of a parcel of samples and patterns which had arrived by post. The gentlemen repaired to the library. In a little while Monk went up to his sister's room. As soon as he had disappeared Mr. Bisset remarked to Chetwynd:

"My lord, I have discovered more than you think, and I have good grounds for suspicions which I expect soon to verify. But I desire that even Mr. Monk should be

made to think that I have retired from the investigation. I beg you to be patient still. I hope in good time to turn your mourning into joy."

With this communication, he retired from the library and strolled about the grounds.

After an hour on the terrace, he returned to the house by the garden entrance, and began to ascend the private stair to his room.

At the upper landing he encountered the Hindoo woman Ragee, with a tray in her hands. He halted in her path, surveying her withered brown face and turbaned head with a lazy smile.

"Ah ! it's you, is it ?" he said, speaking in the Hindostanee tongue. "I've been wishing to see you. I have only to wish, you know, and straightway that I wish for happens. You are a devotee of the goddess Kali, the wife of Siva, are you not ?"

He made strange signals with his hands. The woman stared and trembled.

"You see, I know you," continued Bisset. "You have been connected with the great band of Thugs. You have been a *Sotha*, or entrapper. You have no regard for human life, and would as soon destroy a human being as a fly."

Ragee sat down her tray and retreated a few paces.

"You think you are wise and subtle," said the officer, removing his eye-glass, and transfixing the woman by the power of his keen, penetrating gaze, "but I am wiser and more subtle. I can read your soul and all your past life. I know that your mistress is your nursing, and that you regard her happiness and prosperity as above everything else in the world. She is poor, dependent, nobody. She loves Lord Chetwynd, and a marriage with him will make her rich, independent, and a lady of great consequence. Your motives are

plain to me. You attempted to poison Lady Chetwynd. By some accident you gave her the wrong drug. You gave her a potion of the drug *lanna*, and her death was but death in seeming."

The old woman uttered a strange, choked cry of amazement and rage. Her small eyes stared at Bisset in a deadly terror. Full of superstition, she ascribed to him a supernatural knowledge.

"You do well to tremble," said Bisset, his low, smooth voice cutting the air like a polished sword. "I am of all men for you the most terrible. Murderess! Who was it rescued Lady Chetwynd from her coffin?"

The woman's lips moved, but her voice was dumb. She stood as if frozen with terror, her brown, withered face turning gray and livid, her eyes staring at Bisset in horror.

"Speak!" commanded Bisset, and now his eyes blazed. "Was it Gilbert Monk who rescued Lady Chetwynd?"

Still the old woman did not speak, but the look on her face sufficiently answered the detective. The start, the increased pallor, the cringing terror, the fearful shrinking within herself, the sudden flash of intelligence over all her face, told him plainer than words would have done that Lady Chetwynd had indeed been rescued from her coffin, and by Gilbert Monk.

The flush of anticipated triumph swelled Bisset's heart and kindled on his cheeks.

"Did you know at the time that Monk had rescued my lady?" questioned the officer.

Ragee quailed under his gaze.

"Ah! Hum! Did you know before Lord Chetwynd's return from abroad that my lady had been rescued?"

Still no audible answer, but the same negative expression in the gray, wrinkled face.

"Where is Lady Chetwynd now?"

The blank look in the Hindoo's face assured him that she did not know.

"Does Gilbert Monk know?"

There was a little lightening in the dull, vacant eyes of the old East Indian, which Bisset interpreted as an affirmative answer. But still the old woman did not speak, and one less skilled in reading countenances would have gained nothing from a contemplation of her features. She had answered him nothing in words or gesture, and she believed her knowledge safely hidden in the depths of her black soul.

"You have told me all I want to know, old woman," said Bisset, "and now you may pass on."

He moved away from her a few paces. She spat at him in her rage, seized her tray, and plunged down the stair.

Bisset looked after her with a quiet smile, and went to his room whistling.

He did not emerge again until luncheon time, and then he went down to the breakfast-room as quiet and self-possessed as any guest of the house. One would not dream how hard he was at work at the great problem absorbing all his faculties.

At luncheon he was rather silent. Mr. Tempest exerted himself, however, to keep the ball of conversation rolling, and Chetwynd, in his habitual courtesy, set aside his own griefs to entertain his guests.

Luncheon was nearly over when, as on the previous day, the butler entered with an envelope on a salver. He passed Monk by and approached the detective.

"A telegram for Mr. Bisset," he explained. "The messenger is waiting."

Bisset took the missive, tore it open, and read its contents. They were as follows :

“Did not send telegram to Monk yesterday, nor at any other time.
SCOTSBY & NEWMAN.”

Bisset smiled tranquilly as he crumpled the paper in his hand, and said :

“No answer. Here is a crown for the messenger, and something to pay for baiting his horse and himself at the Chetwynd inn.”

He dropped a half-sovereign on the salver, and the butler withdrew. The incident struck Monk as a travesty upon the similar incident of the previous day. Therefore he said, half-sneeringly, repeating as well as he remembered it, the question which Bisset had put to him :

“Good news, Mr. Bisset?”

“Yes, sir, particularly good,” said Mr. Bisset, pleasantly. “And yet my telegram is of no consequence—merely a business communication from Scotsby and Newman.”

Monk changed color and glanced around him nervously. Lord Chetwynd and Mr. Tempest were engaged in conversation. Only Miss Monk heard Bisset's reply and comprehended its purport.

“Would you like to see my telegram, Mr Monk?” said Bisset, in his good-humored way. “You are welcome to do so.”

He smoothed out the crumpled sheet of paper and passed it to Monk. The latter took it, read it, and passed it back with shaking hands and without a word. Bisset crushed the telegram into his pocket and coolly sipped his wine, watching the face of Monk with a coldly curious gaze.

Monk flashed at him a look of defiance and hatred ; Bisset only smiled exasperatingly.

After luncheon Bisset proclaimed his intention of proceeding up to Eastbourne immediately on his return to London. He could not be persuaded to remain to dinner ; and he begged the marquis to telegraph him if the spectre were again seen. He obtained Fifine's address and stowed it carefully in his pocket-book, and soon after departed in good spirits on his return to town.

Some six days after Bisset's departure from Sussex, Monk received a letter from Flack, informing him that 'Miss Gwyn' was a close prisoner in Lisle Street, that she demanded her freedom, that she had become alarmed and distrustful of her jailers, and begged to see Mr. Monk immediately.

The time had come when Monk must go to her. He knew that Bisset had withdrawn himself from the Park only to watch him. He was well assured that Bisset in clever disguise, was watching the arrival of every train at London Bridge. Clearly his point then was not to go to London Bridge.

Convinced that his theory was right, he proceeded to act upon it. He left Eastbourne that evening for London, but alighted at Croydon, hired a private carriage, and continued his journey in it.

He arrived in London at a late hour, and dismissing the vehicle, proceeded on foot to a small family hotel of which he knew, and at which he was not known.

He registered himself under an assumed name, and before he slept had shaved his face clean of beard, leaving only a heavy mustache. The result of this last procedure was to disguise him most effectually. He scarcely knew himself when he had finished and contemplated his reflection in the mirror. He was not nearly so well-looking as before. The heavy beard had hidden a villainous mouth, a pair of massive jaws, and a long, retreating chin. He looked ten years older than before,

and his cool, calculating nature, his low cunning, his ignoble soul, declared themselves in every line of his now uncovered visage.

He sighed, realizing that he had ruthlessly parted with his greatest beauty, and one that had masked all his facial defects.

"I'll get a false beard to-morrow to wear until mine shall be grown," he thought discontentedly.

He went to bed and to sleep. In the morning he took his breakfast in his room, and about nine o'clock he took a hansom cab and proceeded to Lisle Street.

He was admitted by a slovenly housemaid, and directed to Mrs. Crowl's room. He went upstairs, and knocked at Mrs. Crowl's sitting-room door. Flack admitted him.

Neither Flack nor Mrs. Crowl knew him. He came in jauntily, closing the door behind him. Bernice was not in the room, as he saw at the first glance. His face, grown so suddenly old and displaying the hitherto hidden indices of his true character, preserved little of his ancient semblance, and Mrs. Crowl and Flack continued to regard him without recognition.

Monk smiled, and his wide mouth looked strangely distorted.

"So you don't know me?" he exclaimed.

They knew his voice, and stared at him stupidly, in amazement which was succeeded by alarm.

"What's up governor?" Flack ejaculated. "Anything wrong? Cops after you?"

"No," replied Monk; "I have chosen to shave my beard, that's all. How is Miss Gwyn?"

"She is very indignant at being kept a prisoner, sir," said Mrs. Crowl. "She has called for help, but no one heard her. There's no lodgers in the house in the daytime, and nights I give her a sleeping potion in her tea

and she none the wiser for it. The landlady here is my friend, and my own cousin, too, sir, and I've promised her a five-pound note when my employer—that's you, sir—comes for his refractory sister. My cousin thinks, sir, that Miss Gwyn is wild to run away from a good home and be an actress, and she thinks you quite right to keep the young lady shut up until you take her back home."

"How did you find Miss Gwyn, Flack?" inquired Monk.

Flack replied by narrating the circumstances attending his recognition and recovery of Lady Chetwynd.

"Mrs. Crowl, you and Flack, with the young lady, must set out for Mawr Castle this evening. I cannot go with you, nor follow you at present. And during your stay there Miss Gwyn must be guarded as carefully as if she were the Man with the Iron Mask. You understand?"

Mrs. Crowl answered in the affirmative.

"Now take me to Miss Gwyn," said Monk. "Or stay. Is she in the bed-room adjoining? Let her out here, and you two remain in there. I want to see her alone."

These orders were obeyed, and Bernice was alone with Monk. The two surveyed each other a moment in silence. Bernice was pale and wan, but her face was calm and resolute.

She did not know Monk at the first glance, and her face blanched a little as she gazed at the heavy, cruel jaws, the retreating chin, the villainous mouth. Her instinct warned her that here stood a villain upon whose very face nature had set its mark, warning people not to trust him. But when she lifted her eyes and noticed his swart complexion—his small black eyes, his low

brows and bushy hair—she started back, half in recognition, half in terror.

“What! don’t you know me, Bernice?” said Monk, approaching her and holding out his hand.

“Is it—is it Gilbert?”

“Yes, it’s Gilbert. But why do you shrink away, Bernice? Why that look of loathing in your eyes? Good heavens! is your affection dependent upon my possession of a lot of hair on my face?”

Bernice stared at him in wonder and amazement. For the first time in all her knowledge of him she feared him. She distrusted him instinctively, now that she saw for the first time plainly his uncovered visage.

“You are not very flattering, Bernice,” said Monk, his vanity bitterly wounded. “If I had known by what slight tenure I held your boasted affection, I would have guarded by beard as my most precious possession.”

“Don’t think ill of me, Gilbert,” said Bernice, her voice fluttering. “You are changed, and I hardly knew you at first. Forgive me if I have wounded you. I cannot tell you how glad I am to see you.”

“Even though you did run away from me, eh?”

“I went away from you secretly because I feared you would not consent to let me go openly, Gilbert,” said Bernice bravely. “I was grateful to you, and affectionate, too, Gilbert; but indeed, indeed, I cannot be dependent upon you. It is not right that you, who are yourself poor, should support me, who am able to support myself.”

“But I love to support you, Bernice. I feel it no burden to provide for your wants. I love you, and I want you to cling to me.”

“Don’t tell me in that tone that you love me, Gilbert,” said Bernice, sorrowfully. “You must not love

me in that way ; for, whatever he may do, I shall feel that I am Roy's wife till I die. No other man than he must ever speak of love to me."

"You are absurdly quixotic, Bernice," said Monk, coldly. "I have a right to the life I have twice saved. Are you not selfish in refusing me the only payment I crave for all I have done for you? Look at the amounts of money I have spent upon you. I paid your French governess a hundred pounds a year. I kept up an expensive establishment for you at Mawr Castle. I have hired servants for you, and lavished money upon your clothes, jewels, music, books, caprices ; and this is my reward ! You are anxious to throw me over. You are tired of the innocent seclusion of your home in Wales, and want to see the world."

"You wrong me, Gilbert. But I must repeat, at the risk of being again misunderstood, that I cannot return to Mawr Castle. I have no claim there ; I decline to return to it, and I insist on being allowed to go my own way, and earn my own living. I want you to help me get a situation as governess."

Monk was driven at bay. He could not allow her to go forth into the world to earn her living. A detective with the scent of a bloodhound was upon his track. His only safety lay in outwitting his pursuer, and hiding Bernice away in some place like Mawr Castle, or else to marry her and convey her secretly abroad. She would not marry him now—he believed that she would consent in course of time—and he must, therefore, send her to Mawr Castle. But if she would not go? What then? His safety depended on her going. She must go !

He set his teeth together grimly, and his mouth and jaws set themselves in a hard and angry expression.

"Bernice," he said, and there was a tone in his voice

which she had never heard in it before, "as your brother, I shall exercise a brother's loving authority, and send you back to the safe seclusion of Mawr Castle. If you feel any gratitude toward me for what I have done for you, you will go quietly and willingly."

"I will not go!" flashed Bernice.

"You will!" said Monk, grimly. "I am saving you only from a fate which would be too hard and bitter for one so tenderly nurtured as you. I will see that Flack and Mrs. Crowl treat you respectfully, but you go with them to Mawr Castle to-night."

He would not listen to her protestations. He called to Mrs. Crowl and Flack, who came forth from the inner room.

"Conduct Miss Gwyn to her room, Mrs. Crowl," said Monk. "And remember, madam, that you are to treat Miss Gwyn with the gentlest courtesy. She will set out with you this evening for Wales."

Bernice retreated before Mrs. Crowl, but that person caught her up in her arms, springing suddenly upon her, carried her to the inner room, and locked her in.

During the remainder of the day Mrs. Crowl paid frequent visits to Lady Chetwynd, endeavoring to obtain her ladyship's submission to Monk's will, but she might as well have talked to marble. Bernice's suspicions and distrust of Mrs. Crowl had extended themselves to suspicion and distrust of Monk, and she would not willingly go back to his protection.

About five o'clock Mrs. Crowl brought a supper to her prisoner, with a hot cup of tea which was carefully drugged with a sleeping powder. The woman went out, leaving Bernice alone. Young Lady Chetwynd ate her supper, but avoided the tea, which she poured upon her carpet behind the chest of drawers, convinced that the beverage was drugged.

Then, having finished her supper, she lay on the bed and closed her eyes.

A few minutes later Mrs. Crowl entered. She glanced at the recumbent figure on the bed, and looked in the empty cup. Then she opened the door leading from the bedroom into the passage without, and the landlady, who was standing outside, came in.

"You may as well take the tray out at this door," said Mrs. Crowl. "The girl's asleep, and will not waken till morning. I gave her a heavy dose, on account of the long journey that's before us. This door need not be locked again. Flack has gone for a cab and will be here directly, and will carry the girl down through this door, it being the shortest way. Here's your money, Nancy, and five pounds besides."

"I'll take it to the light and count it," said the landlady, going into the sitting-room. "See here," she added, a moment later. "The pay is ten shillings short. Meals for Miss Gwyn were extra, you know."

Mrs. Crowl came and bent over the bed. Assured that Bernice slept, she went into the sitting-room to assist the landlady in recounting the money.

As quick as a flash, Bernice leaped from the bed, caught up her effects, which were on a chair by the door, and fled out into the passage and down the stairs, putting on her hat as she ran.

The women heard her flight, and flew after her in a panic.

Too late! The house door was ajar, as Flack had left it on going out to signal a cab. Bernice sped down the steps into the street. She was scarcely upon the pavement when a cab rolled up and Flack leaped out, directly in her path!



CHAPTER XXIX.

MISTRESS AND MAID.

Young Lady Chetwynd did not lose her presence of mind as Flack, springing from the cab, barred her further progress down the street. He recognized her even as she did him. With a great oath, and with outstretched hands, he sprang forward to intercept her. But with the quickness of a flash, Bernice wheeled and ran in the direction she had come, passing the lodging-house from which she had just escaped. She had barely passed, when Mrs. Crawl and the landlady, in a panic, came out of the house and swiftly descended the steps in search of her.

Flack and the two women bounded in pursuit of the young fugitive. The hour was yet early, but the sky was fast darkening, and a fine mist was beginning to fall. A gas lamp or two flickered through the wet. There were few people in the street. Bernice had a brief start of her pursuers and flew on like a mad creature. She turned the nearest corner instinctively, ran a block, and turned a second corner before her pursuers appeared around the first.

There had been a momentary delay in the pursuit. The landlady had gone back to her open house. Mrs. Crawl, remembering suddenly that she had not on her bonnet, signalled to the cab Flack had summoned,

waited for it to come up, and continued her pursuit in that. Flack had been detained for an instant by Mrs. Crowl, who had frantically begged him to summon the cab for her and the delay—brief as it was—was most providential for Bernice.

Flack, with a muttered curse upon his confederate for detaining him, dashed on, turning the corner as Bernice had done ; but then he paused, looking up and down the street, uncertain which way to go. Thus occurred another providential delay, contributing further to the escape of the young fugitive.

“I can’t lose time in this way,” muttered the man. “She’s gone down the street.”

He ran in the direction thus indicated. The cab, in which was Mrs. Crowl, followed his guidance, and passed him in the pursuit. Flack had not gone more than a block—not further than the first corner—when he became convinced that he had taken the wrong course. With an audible oath, he turned and hastened in the opposite direction.

All this delay had been fatal to him.

Bernice had sped on swiftly, turning corner after corner, without aim in her course beyond the hope and design of placing as great a distance as possible between herself and her pursuers. And she saw nothing whatever of them. Once or twice, hearing steps or the roll of a cab behind her, she crouched in a doorway and waited until they had passed, but the steps were not those of Flack, and the cab was not that in which Mrs. Crowl was seated.

Gradually, as the distance she had traversed became greater, and her heart throbbed fiercely, and she became weary and footsore, she slackened her speed to a walk, yet she dare not sit down to rest lest her enemies should overtake her.

It seemed to her that she had walked many miles when at last she came out upon a wide, well-lighted street, where omnibuses were running and cabs rattled swiftly up and down—a street lined with fine shops, and with plenty of promenaders despite the fine mist that was falling.

This was Oxford Street. Bernice mingled with the tide of pedestrians, and a feeling of safety and security replaced her late terror. Her sacque was on her arm. She drew it on over her shoulders, adjusted her hat, and walked on very slowly.

She had three-pence in her pocket, and wore her watch and chain, which would serve in emergency as money.

But where was she to spend the night? She sat down upon the doorstep of a darkened house in a quiet street, so near to Oxford Street that she could hear the rattle of the omnibuses over the pavements. The bells of a church somewhere near rang out the hour of eight. People passed her, but no one noticed her or spoke to her.

“Perhaps I might stay here all night?” Bernice thought, anxiously.

She crept closer in the shadow of the tall iron railing protecting the sides of the tall flight of steps. She had scarcely ensconced herself to her satisfaction, when a man came hurrying along the street and ascended the very steps on which she was crouching. He drew a latch-key from his pocket, and while vainly endeavoring to fit it in the lock in the darkness, his gaze fell upon Bernice.

“Here, you tramp,” he said, roughly. “Be off with you, or I’ll call a policeman. My steps are not a lounging place for tramps like you.”

Without a word Bernice arose and staggered on.

She had no word of pleading—nothing to say for herself—but moved on like a shadow through the darkness and the mist.

A little later she came out into a square, dingy and gloomy enough at best, but now dark and dreary with its spectral gas-lights and rows of frowning buildings on every side. This was Soho Square. Bernice crossed the square and passed into a narrow street beyond.

She could hear the rattle of Oxford Street omnibuses and cabs on Oxford Street pavement, but little more than a block away ; but this narrow street upon which she had entered out of Soho Square was very quiet. The houses were mostly darkened. From one house alone, the lower floor of which was apparently occupied as a shop, streamed out a broad glare of light which was strangely alluring. Over the door was suspended a sign, with the legend painted upon it in gilt :

PIERRE BONGATEAU,

French Confectioner.

Bernice paused before the confectioner's window and looked in. It was a bright, clear room, with a counter upon each side. Upon one counter was every variety of French bread. Upon the other counter were simple cakes in variety, and cups and saucers, showing that the little French shop was a resort for people out of Oxford Street who desired a cup of real France coffee.

“How pleasant it is in there,” thought Bernice, looking vainly for the shopman or other occupant of the establishment. “I’d like a cup of coffee. It’s a French

shop; the name is Pierre Bongateau. Was not Fifine's name Bongateau? I think so. Her father was a pastry-cook, living in Soho Square, or just out of it. Was that Soho Square back yonder? Perhaps this is Fifine's father's shop."

She continued to look into the room with longing eyes.

A woman with a basket on her arm, came hurrying past Bernice, and pushing open the door, entered the shop. There was a bell attached to the door, and it rang out sharply. A woman came out of the little back parlor behind the shop, and proceeded to wait upon the late customer.

The shopwoman was French, as was apparent at a glance. She wore a trimly-fitting black gown, a jaunty little white apron, trimmed with cherry ribbons, and a coquettish little white cap, with a cherry ribbon in that also. The dark sallow face under the cap, with bright black eyes and a vivacious expression, struck Bernice as being strangely familiar.

It was—yes, it was Fifine, her former maid.

Bernice watched the Frenchwoman with a wistful gaze. The customer came out presently with a well filled basket, and Fifine began to cover the bread and cakes with a thin gauze, preparatory to closing the shop for the night.

"She is going to shut up," murmured Bernice. "And then I shall be doubly alone, Fifine loved me. She was good-hearted. I am very tired. I wonder if she would give me shelter to-night, and not betray me to any one. I wish I dared go in."

A noisy party of young men came out of Oxford Street, approaching her. As they drew near they espied her, and one of them, with a drunken laugh, endeavored to peer into the girl's face.

"Let's see your face, my beauty," he hiccoughed. "What—shy? Here, boys, is something new. A girl actually shy, although she's in London streets alone at this hour. Bah! she's acting. I'll have the kiss, or we'll go home with you, my dear, or both. Now for it!"

He put out his arm to clasp her waist. With a stifled scream, Bernice sprang away from him and ran into the pastry-cook's shop, the bell on the door ringing loudly.

Fifine turned toward the new-comer and glanced also out of the door. She comprehended the cause of the abrupt ingress.

"Sit down, Mademoiselle," she said, in her soft French accent. "The men will soon be gone. You are safe here."

Bernice's hair veiled her face. She flung it back with a sudden gesture, pushed back her shabby, limp little hat, and stood revealed, pale, despairing, yet wondrously beautiful.

"Fifine," she said, softly, "you think me dead. I am changed, I know; but don't you know me?"

The voice was recognized sooner than the lovely face. Fifine staggered back with a great gasp, and then, believing that she looked upon a spectre, gave a piercing scream and fell to the floor in a swoon.

The noisy and lawless young men whose insults had driven Bernice to seek refuge in the French confectioner's shop passed on when they saw their intended victim enter the shop door. No one in the house was aroused by the scream of Fifine. Bernice devoted herself with all haste to the recovery of the Frenchwoman.

Her efforts were soon rewarded by the gradual return of Fifine to consciousness. The Frenchwoman gave a great gasp similar to that she had given when

fainting, and opened her eyes, only to close them again tightly, and to repeat her scream with added vigor and fierceness.

Lady Chetwynd stooped over the recumbent figure, and said, in a tone of gentle authority :

“Hush, Fifine. You will have the police here in a moment more. Compose yourself. Can you not comprehend that I am Lady Chetwynd?”

Fifine gathered up her sprawling figure into the shape of a ball, and rocked herself to and fro frantically, crying out shrilly in the French language :

“Oh, Heaven ! it's a ghost ! It's a warning ! I am not long for this world ! I'm to be cut off in my youthful prime. Oh, the good Lord have pity ? My good father ! My poor mother !”

She shrank away into the farther corner. Lady Chetwynd followed her, expostulating, entreating, reasoning. As the Frenchwoman grew somewhat calmer, Bernice laid her white, cool hand upon the hand of her former maid, saying :

“Grasp my hand, Fifine. There, you see I am flesh and blood. Don't tremble and moan so. It is I, indeed, Fifine. I did not die, as you thought.”

Fifine's faith that her visitor was a ghost was staggered. The Frenchwoman's native sense began to assert itself. Her memory, too, was quickened, and she recollected various incidents that had transpired during the past few days that went far to proclaim the fact that Lady Chetwynd had escaped the grave and was still living.

“There you see it is I, and not a ghost,” said Lady Chetwynd, as Fifine's limp body began to stiffen, and Fifine's eyes began to assume their normal proportions. “Haven't you a kind word for me, Fifine ? I am in sore need of a friend. I had no intention of seeking

you. I came upon you by chance. Will you give me a night's shelter, and will you keep my secret, Fifine? I want no one, not even Lord Chetwynd, to know that I live."

"What, does not my lord know?" cried Fifine, amazed.

"No. Promise me that you will keep my secret, that you will tell no one that Lady Chetwynd lives. Swear it, Fifine."

"I promise—I swear it," said Fifine, in an awe-struck voice. "But, my lady, I cannot understand how it is that you live and that my lord does not know it."

"I will explain. Remember that you are bound by an oath to keep my secret. But first, are we alone?" and Lady Chetwynd glanced toward the door of the rear parlor.

"Yes, my lady, we are alone in the house. The good father and mother went to the French theatre to-night and I am alone in charge. I am a lady's maid now as before, my lady, but my mistress is at the opera this evening, and I am privileged to remain here until eleven o'clock. You can speak freely, my lady—no one will hear us."

There was a timorous look still on the girl's face which Lady Chetwynd marked.

"I see, Fifine," she said, "that even now you are not altogether persuaded that I am no spectre. Does it seem so improbable that I should have been confined and consigned to the burial vault while I was in a state of trance? It is strange and improbable, I know, but it is true, and mine is not the only case of burial during a trance resembling death. But one person alone suspected that animation was only suspended, not annihilated, within me, and that was Mr. Monk."

"My faith! And Mr. Monk rescued you, my lady?"

In response to this exclamation, Bernice told Fifine her whole pitiful story, including Lord Chetwynd's intended marriage with Sylvia Monk, and Gilbert Monk's avowal of his love to her. She ended by saying :

"I have tried to get a situation as governess. I have but three-pence in my pocket to-night, and I am shelterless."

"Not shelterless while Fifine lives, my lady. I will keep your secret. No hypocrite nor mock sympathy from any one can drag it from me," exclaimed the Frenchwoman, volubly. "Ah ! my lady, you were kind to me and I do not forget it. I wish I might live with you again, although I have a good mistress now. You shall stay here, my lady, until you can get a situation. My room is unused here, and you shall have it. The good father and mother need not suspect who you are, my lady. Let them think you Miss Gwyn, a new lodger, a lady I used to know. Shall it be so?"

"If you please, Fifine. You comfort me."

"And you need comfort, poor infant !" said Fifine, again rubbing her eyes industriously. "Was ever such sorrow, such romance, such despair ? Ah ! my lady, the false husband shall not find you here. You are safe here. It may be that I can get you a situation as companion, my lady," she said, with a start and a sudden flush. "And then I could serve you still though secretly. My mistress has sought a companion of accomplishments for a month past. She wants a young lady who can sing and play the pianoforte and read French—a dressed-up lady, whom she will treat as a lady ; for with all her proud, cold ways, my mistress is a lady to her heart's core. I will recommend you to her as Miss Gwyn, my former mistress in reduced circumstances, and she has such faith in me that she will gladly

engage you. I have been with her since the week after your ladyship died—that is, was buried.”

“Oh, Fifine, if you can only get this place for me! I feel so lost, so cast out into the great world, so helpless and forlorn. Who is your mistress?”

“Lady Diana Northwick, madame. She’s a beauty and a belle, and cold as ice. I’ll speak to Lady Diana this very night, and to-morrow, my lady, you shall be in your new home. Let me get you a cup of coffee, my lady,” said the Frenchwoman. “Come into the little back parlor.”

Fifine conducted her former mistress into the rear room, where wax candles were burning, and an air of coziness prevailed. Bernice sank into an easy chair which Fifine drew to the table, and the maid bustled about, preparing a cup of strong French coffee. She brought it, all black and steaming, to Lady Chetwynd, with a roll. The marchioness drank the fragrant beverage eagerly.

“I wonder,” said Fifine, thoughtfully, “if my lord does not suspect that you live, my lady. There was a man here the other day, my mother tells me, a gentleman, a swell with an eye-glass and a cane, who asked for me. He came to Lady Diana’s to see me. And what did the miserable want? Why only to ask what dress your ladyship was buried in, and if it had a fine darn in the lace under the sleeve? Of course it had. Did I not darn the rent myself, and was it not well done? He brought the dress to me, and I identified it. But what did he mean? There is a mystery here which has puzzled me much.”

“I know no such person as you describe, Fifine, and I cannot think who he can be, but I left my dress at the Park the last time I was there, and securely hidden, as I thought. So they have found it? Ah, he must have

been sent to you by old Ragee!" cried Bernice, paling suddenly. "Fifine, that woman has twice tried to take my life. I am afraid of her. She has found the dress and has employed some one to seek for me."

"You must be right, my lady, for my mother tells me that a strange heathen woman has been here twice, asking singular questions, and wanting to be taken in as lodger. She was very anxious to know if my mother had a lady lodging here, and she stayed in the shop many hours watching the door of this room as a cat watches a mouse. My mother thought her demented. I could not think who she might be; but she is Ragee. I feel ready to swear."

"She will come again. She is cruel, remorseless pitiless. She is like a human tigress thirsting for my blood. Fifine, in Heaven's name, promise me again that you will keep my secret; that not even to Lord Chetwynd himself will you reveal the fact that I live—promise?"

"I swear to keep your secret, my lady, until you yourself give me leave to tell it!" said Fifine solemnly. "I will not betray you even to my own parents or to my mistress."

"Then you must cease to call me 'my lady,' Fifine. I am only Miss Gwyn—Miss Bernice Gwyn you can call me. I shall have to relinquish my own name of Bernice."

Fifine approached and removed the empty cup. Then she took Lady Chetwynd's hand and kissed it affectionately, mentally registering a vow to be true to the promise she had given, the solemn oath she had taken and to befriend and protect her former young mistress to the best of her ability.

A sound of the rattling of heavy wooden shutters was now heard.

"It is my father," said Fifine. "He is putting up the shutters. The father and mother have returned from the theatre, and I must go soon to my mistress. I will wait to commend your ladyship to the care of the good mother."

The shop door was pushed open, the bell ringing violently. Fifine's parents had returned. Lady Chetwynd rose up taking off her limp little hat, and awaited their appearance. Fifine ran and opened the door leading into the shop, and called out volubly :

"Is it you, my father? Hasten this way, I have a guest to consign to your care before I leave. Come !"

CHAPTER XXX.

BERNICE ANXIOUSLY SOUGHT.

Young Lady Chetwynd trembled with a terrible anxiety and dread as the French confectioner and his wife entered the cozy little back parlor behind their shop, where she awaited them. She stood up, pale, yet with a sweet and gentle dignity, a quiet self-possession, and a faint smile on her brave, sweet young face, that thrilled Fifine with a new love and respect for her.

"Come in, *mon père* ; come in, *ma mère*," said Lady Chetwynd's former maid, volubly. "I have here a surprise for you. I have taken in a lodger for the night. It is Miss—Miss Gwyn, a former mistress of mine. Miss Gwyn, Monsieur and Madame Bongateau, my good father and mother."

M. Bongateau, repressing a look of surprise, made a flourishing bow to "Miss Gwyn ;" Madame Bongateau

made a little bobbing courtesy, intended to indicate the deepest respect for the young lady.

"I do not remember your name, Miss Gween," said the confectioner, with an air of hospitality, "but you are welcome to the shelter of my roof and the best my house affords. Pray, be seated. Do not stand on our account, I beseech you."

Bernice resumed her seat. Fifine hastened to remove the outer wraps of her mother.

Bernice liked both husband and wife at first glance. Their simple courtesy was no outside veneering, but the expression of kindly natures and a true, inbred politeness. They asked no questions. They saw that their guest was a lady, and Fifine's simple introduction had been sufficient to commend her to their kindest attention.

Fifine made fresh coffee for her parents and a little supper was eaten, at which young Lady Chetwynd took part. After the supper, Fifine conducted her ladyship to a pretty little bedroom upstairs, overlooking the street. This was Fifine's own room when at home.

"My lady," she said, simply, "you will honor me by wearing my clothing as it were your own. Your outside garments are quite ruined. We will attend to those to-morrow. You are safe here. I will put my parents still further on their guard against your enemies. And now good-night.

She took Lady Chetwynd's thin, white hand and kissed it, but Bernice stooped and kissed Fifine's cheek with a grateful affection that brought tears to the girl's eyes.

Fifine soon withdrew, and Lady Chetwynd undressed, and went to bed and to sleep.

It was late in the morning when she awakened. The shop-bell was ringing fitfully below, as customers came

and went. Bernice arose and dressed herself in the garments Fifine had provided for her. Her toilet was scarcely made when a low knock on the door announced Madame Bongateau, who came in with a tray on which was coffee, hot rolls, and little pats of new, yellow butter, unsalted.

Madame greeted her guest with kindly interest, and inquired with solicitude how she had passed the night, and how she found herself this morning. Bernice having replied satisfactorily to these inquiries, madame said :

"It is much more cheerful down stairs than here, Mademoiselle. When you have eaten your breakfast, come down to our little back parlor and read the morning papers by the fire. The morning is wet and chilly, and Pierre would insist upon the extravagance of a fire. I own the effect is delicious. You will come, Mademoiselle?"

Bernice assented, and her hostess withdrew. The young fugitive ate her breakfast, and soon after descended to the little parlor, which was indeed bright and cozy. A low fire was burning in the grate.

She read the newspapers, looking over the columns of "Wants" with great care. Madame Bongateau was called frequently into the shop, and Bernice was for the most of the time alone. She could hear the rattling of spoons in the cups as customers sipped their coffee; she could hear distinctly nearly every word that was spoken in the shop, yet the murmur of voices, and the eager bustling, and the occasional sharp reprimands of madame to monsieur were not unpleasant to her. After her recent enforced and long solitude, these indications of busy life were, in fact, decidedly pleasant.

At noon Madame Bongateau brought to her guest a

dainty luncheon, daintily served upon a small table, which she wheeled before Bernice.

Bernice had finished her repast, the table had been removed, and she was again alone, with a newspaper on her knee, when the shop bell tingled for the hundredth time that day, and a man entered the shop, which at the moment was nearly deserted. Monsieur and madame was there, however, at the desk near the partition between the shop and parlor, and Bernice heard the new-comer approach the desk with a swift stride, and address the worthy couple in a voice that startled her, and thrilled her very soul with alarm.

It was the voice of Gilbert Monk !

"Good-morning, Monsieur, Madame," said Monk, politely, yet with perceptible impatience. "Are you the parents of one Fifine Bongateau, who formerly lived at Chetwynd Park, Sussex?"

Madame Bongateau courteously replied in the affirmative.

"Is Fifine at home?" demanded Monk, with a quick, sharp glance toward the inner room.

"No, Monsieur," said madame, in a tone of surprise.

"Pardon, Monsieur, but what interest has Monsieur in our Fifine?" inquired Monsieur Bongateau, giving his long mustache a fiercer upward twirl.

"I am Lord Chetwynd's step-brother," said Monk. "I am in search of a young lady who has fled from her home and friends. I think, as she had no money, she might come to Fifine, who formerly served her. Is she here?"

"Who is it you seek, Monsieur?" inquired Madame Bongateau, cautiously.

Monk hesitated. Bernice held her breath in an agony of suspense.

Monk continued to reflect. With an assumption of frankness, he said, at last :

“The young lady is known as Miss Gwyn. She may have taken another name, or pretended to be some noble lady, possibly. She has been ill, and her brain is not yet quite right. It is necessary that I find her immediately, and restore her to her home. Is she in this house?”

“We do not take lodgers, Monsieur,” said Madame Bongateau, somewhat loftily. “We regret that we are not able to assist you in your search for Miss Gween, but you will be obliged to look for her elsewhere.”

“Is she not in this house, Madame?” demanded Monk, sharply.

“Hi, Monsieur? Is it thus you speak to madame, my wife?” cried the little confectioner, with his fiercest air. “Do you come here to subject us to the cross-question—the inquisition? Is not this a country where even the French exile has his rights? Be kind enough to depart, Monsieur. I cannot permit to madame this agitation. Go !”

The confectioner pointed to the shop door in true theatrical style.

Monk glared at the confectioner, who smiled back at him airily. Then, with an oath, Gilbert Monk strode to the door. As he passed out a carriage drove up to the shop and Miss Monk put her head out of the window, calling to her brother.

He started, looked annoyed and surprised, but obeyed her summons. His dejected, angry air told plainly the story of his discomfiture.

“I came to see Fifine,” said Sylvia, regarding her brother keenly, “but I think I won’t get out, after all. Did you receive the note I sent you in care of Scotsby and Newman, Chancery Lane?”

"No, I've not been around there to-day," said Monk, sullenly. "I left you in Sussex. What are you doing in town."

"We came up—Roy and I—to do a little shopping," said Miss Monk. "We've ordered the wedding-cards. Roy is off this morning with Mr. Tempest, and I have been shopping in Regent Street. I am uneasy, Gilbert. You look strangely. Is—is all safe?" she asked, in a whisper too low for the ears of coachman or footmen.

"Not particularly so," said Monk, coolly. "The girl's escaped from me."

"Escaped! Great Heaven! Escaped!"

"Yes. You act as if all the danger threatened you. You needn't be troubled. She won't trouble you," said Monk, speaking in Hindostanee, that the servants might not understand him.

"Come and see me at Park Lane, Gilbert, at Lady Marchmont's. And give me your address. I may need to communicate with you."

Monk had gone back, since the assumption of his false beard, to the West End hotel he was in the habit of frequenting. He gave his address promptly, and, declining a drive with his sister, walked moodily toward Oxford Street. Miss Monk gave her order, and the carriage turned into Oxford Street and proceeded westward. It stopped, however, not a block away, and Miss Monk alighted and went into a linen-draper's shop. She had brought Ragee with her on her shopping excursion, and had left her here in waiting. She gave the Hindoo woman certain directions, and then went on alone to Park Lane, while Ragee hurried toward the French confectioner's.

No sooner had Monk departed than Madame Bonga-teau hastened into the little back parlor to reassure her guest. She found Bernice calm, resolute, and brave.

"You heard all, Mademoiselle?" asked the Frenchwoman. "Did I do right? Or was the gentleman your brother?"

"You did right, madame, and I thank you. The gentleman is not my brother. I am an orphan, and have neither brother nor sister," said Bernice. "I know the gentleman's voice. It is from him I ran away," and a red flush crept up into her clear, olive cheeks. "He wanted me to marry him, and I—I am bound to another."

"Ah! I understand now," said the Frenchwoman, kindly. "You are safe here, Mademoiselle."

"I have a worse enemy than he," said Bernice, with a frightened start and a glance toward the shop—"an East Indian woman, a Hindoo. I fear her, Madame. She is very cunning. I pray she will not come here again. Fifine says that she has been here once. Oh, Madame, deny me to every one. Do not allow any one to see me, I entreat."

"You are safe here, *mon enfant*," said Madame Bongateau, reassuringly. "As to the heathen woman, I shall have wit enough to manage her. Trust in me, my dear young lady."

The shop-bell went ting-a-ling at this moment. Monsieur Bongateau was busily engaged in waiting on half a dozen customers at once, and madame hastened out to wait upon the new-comer.

The latest arrival was an elderly woman in a long black cloak, black poke bonnet, and a thick black veil. She looked like a countrywoman. She passed monsieur, and hurried with a gliding step toward madame, meeting her just outside the door of the back parlor. It seemed as if she had meant to slip into the inner room, but madame blocked her way, demanding what she wanted.

"You know me," said the woman, in a foreign accent,

her voice low and sibilant, penetrating to Bernice's ears. "I've been here before. Listen to me."

Bernice sat upright in her chair, like one turned to stone. The new-comer was Ragee, the Hindoo woman. But she could get no satisfaction from Madame Bongateau, who foiled her at every turn.

"I am tired," said the Hindoo at last. "Let me go into your inner room and rest."

She made a dart past Madame Bongateau toward the door of the back parlor. The Frenchwoman pounced upon her like a hawk, and held her hands in a fierce grip, barring the enemy's progress with her person.

Monsieur saw and came to the rescue.

"It's a mad beggar-woman," he explained to his customers. "Woman, go, or I shall call the police!"

The Hindoo snarled like a tigress. She was determined to enter the inner room, if but for a second. She was convinced that Bernice was within. She was possessed of a dogged patience, and braced herself to await a favorable opportunity of entering the inner room.

"The police!" cried monsieur.

The few customers in the confectioner's shop retreated toward the door, and there halted with an instinctive desire to know what the woman wanted, and how Bongateau would rid himself of her.

"Let me go in," snarled Ragee, showing her teeth. "Let me go in, I say. I know the lady. I will not harm her. I have just one word to say to her. I am her friend."

She clutched her bosom as she spoke, grasping a vial that was hidden within the folds of her dress.

"The police!" screamed madame, shrilly, holding the Hindoo at bay.

The shop door opened, and the shop bell rang again,

but this time gently. A gentleman came in, a slender, dapper West-End swell apparently, with gold-mounted eye-glass and gold-mounted walking-stick. I was Mr. Bisset, the detective officer.

"A cup of coffee, please," he said, languidly. "Aw! what's the wow?"

"A mad beggar-woman, sir," said a frowzy-headed girl, who was edging away toward the door. "She wants to get inside, sir."

Bisset's languid gaze dwelt upon the outlines of the "mad beggar-woman." Then, with a sudden gleam in his lazy eyes, he approached the door of the inner room, and the group gathered before it.

"You called for the police, Monsieur?" he asked. "Very well. I'm an officer in the service. What do you want?"

Bongateau surveyed the dandy in astonishment.

"You a police?" cried the Frenchman. "Oh, ver' well. Get this woman out. I want her not here. She have annoy us to death."

Bisset clutched the woman's arm. She shrank away from him snarling. With a sudden movement, he threw up her vail, revealing the withered, dusky face of the Hindoo woman.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said Bisset, coolly. "What are you rowing here for?"

Ragee did not answer, but her teeth gleamed at her interlocutor from between her shiveled lips, and she glared at him sullenly.

"Has she pretended that she's looking here for a young lady, Madame?" asked Bisset.

"Yes, sir."

"What name did she ask for?"

"Miss—Miss Gwellan, I think," replied madame, with an effort at remembering.

Bisset's face gleamed.

"So!" he said. 'The monosyllable, as if rolled from his lips, was full of meaning. "Did she find Miss Gwellan?"

"No, sir; there's no lady of that name in my house."

"Indeed! You hear that, do you, you venerable heathen? You'd better be off."

Ragee shared Bisset's opinion as to the propriety of her departure. She entertained a wholesome fear of a slender, swell-like officer, who had a grip of iron, and who could talk in Hindostanee. And so, grumbling and snarling, she hurried away.

But once outside the shop, she paused and muttered, as Gilbert Monk had done:

"I know she's in there. Only to get at her. Let me see her but one moment, and she will never disturb Missy again. There's three of us after her, but I shall get her."

She went across the street to a stationer's shop, and so ensconced herself within the stationer's window as to command a view of the French confectioner's door. And thus she waited.

Meanwhile Bisset was ingratiating himself with monsieur and madame.

"That was a dangerous woman," remarked the officer, after Ragee had vanished. "You must keep Miss Gwellan out of the old creature's way, or the Hindoo will do her a mischief."

"The heathen woman won't be allowed to enter the shop again," said madame, decisively.

"She is artful. She will creep in upon Miss Gwellan—"

"There's no Miss Gwellan here," said madame, shortly.

"No? Did I mistake the name?"

"The woman spoke that name. I do not know it, asseverated madame.

"What is the name, then?" asked Bisset, insinuatingly. "Not Gwellan, you say. What then?"

Madame looked perturbed. Monsieur shrugged his shoulders, and went away to wait upon his customers.

"This is the third time to-day I have been asked about a young lady who is supposed to be here," said madame. "My faith! Is there, then, no liberty in England? First comes a tall young man, dark and swarthy, with a big beard—"

"Monk" interpolated Bisset, with an odd gleam in his eyes.

"Next comes the heathen woman; and now you question me," said madame, unheeding his interruption. "And why all this? I do not like it. The empire, at its worst, had not this espionage—oh, no! Who is the young lady so wanted? What has she done? Come, then; answer, if you can."

"I am looking for a young lady," said Bisset, frankly. "I don't know what she calls herself. I believe that she is in your house. I am her true friend. Let me see her but for a moment, and I will convince you and her that I am her friend."

Madame arched her brows as if resigning herself to the care of Heaven. Then she said, sternly:

"You are like the rest, and I don't believe that you are an officer. Go away. Shall a respectable family be driven mad by so many people all on one errand? I know nothing. You drive us wild. Go! go!"

She waved her arms with a wild gesture. Bisset was experienced in dealing with women-kind, and he saw that nothing was to be gained by a further stay. He apologized, therefore, for the trouble he had given, and

slowly beat a retreat. He strolled toward Oxford Street, saying to himself :

"The young lady is at Bongateau's fast enough. The name Gwellan. Ha ! I must be careful. I must not act too soon. I must see my way clear before I communicate with Lord Chetwynd. The young lady is back there, I say, and deuced suspicious. The question is, how am I to get speech with her?"

That question was occupying the minds of both Gilbert Monk and old Ragee at the same instant.

It seemed as if a game had been entered upon among the three. Which was likely to win ?

No further demonstration by any of the three was made that day. Bernice rested, and was safe in the little back parlor, as carefully guarded as if she had been a princess, and the Bongateaus her sworn guards.

After dinner, which was served to the young Lady Chetwynd alone in the little back parlor at six o'clock, Fifine arrived in a cab, and came bustling in, all joy and excitement.

Monsieur waited in the shop while Fifine hurried into the parlor.

The wax lights were burning. There was a low fire, and Bernice sat before it, her lovely face bowed on her hand. Madame was darning lace by the table. Both looked up as Fifine entered with a breezy rustling.

"Good news, my la—Miss Gwyn !" cried Fifine, approaching her former mistress with a glowing face. "Such good news ! I have talked with Lady Diana, and her ladyship will see you at once. She desires me to bring you to her now. She is not well this evening, and sees no visitors. Will you come?"

Young Lady Chetwynd sprang up with a face all aglow.

"Oh, Fifine ! let us go now !" she exclaimed. "I

have been a great trouble to-day to your father and mother, I fear, although they will not own it. Mr. Monk has been here, and old Ragee, and another. They all seem to know that I am here."

"And they are all watching our house," said madame, calmly. "They have been watching since dusk."

"You hear, Fifine? How are we to get away?"

"I know not, my la—Miss Gwyn," replied Fifine, growing sober. "We cannot get away unseen. What are we to do, *ma mère*?"

Madame Bongateau reflected.

"Miss Gwyn has a secret," she said, quietly. "It is easy to see that, and to see, also, that she is not what she seems. But her secret is her own. She has sought our protection, and she shall have it. We know that whatever she is, and how many her enemies, she is a lady, innocent and noble. I will help her to escape from the house unseen to-night."

"You, *ma mère*?"

"I, Fifine. Bring me the gray garments Miss Gween wore here last night, the shabby hat, the wrinkled veil. Are we not nearly of a height, Miss Gween? Well, I will wear your clothes and go away in the cab which Fifine has left outside. The spies will follow me. Then you two must steal out on foot into Oxford Street and take a cab to Grosvenor Square. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly. The idea is magnificent, *ma mère*!" cried Fifine, in a transport of delight.

Lady Chetwynd was quietly dressed in a new Sunday suit of Fifine's freshly home from the milliner's. It was a simple, lady-like costume of black silk. Fifine brought a velvet jacket to wear over it, and a small round hat of black lace, trimmed with a single crushed

pink rose. Bernice put these on, with a black veil, and was ready to depart.

Madame hurried up stairs to equip herself in Bernice's cast-off outer clothing, and soon returned, equipped for the street. After a brief consultation with monsieur, she glided out of the house, whispered a few words to the cabman, entered the cab, and the vehicle rolled swiftly away across Soho Square and into the narrow streets beyond.

Two watchers, Gilbert Monk and old Ragee, started in swift pursuit, in cabs waiting near at hand.

But Mr. Bisset, who was lounging opposite, only smiled and muttered :

"That's too thin. I wonder Monk was taken in by it. The right parties will be along directly."

He was right. The shop-door opened cautiously, and Lady Chetwynd and Fifine came out quickly, speeding through the darkness toward Oxford Street. Bisset following them. They signalled a cab, and Bisset heard the order given by Fifine. The marchioness and her former maid entered the cab, and were driven away toward the West End.

Bisset flung away the stump of a cigar he had been smoking, and muttered ;

"Treedy ! The game is treedy ! Grosvenor Square, number fifty-three and a half. Why, that's Lady Diana Northwick's. Wonder how much Lady Diana knows. Mr. Monk, I'm coming out ahead. The young lady is safe to stay at Lady Diana's till wanted. I'll arrange a little surprise for my friend Mr. Monk. By Jove, now, how he will glare at me when I come out ahead ! To-morrow evening will be an eventful one in the history of several persons, ha, ha ! I can't bring things around sooner in a way to suit me ! But to-morrow evening—ha, ha !"

Chuckling softly under his breath, he walked along Oxford Street leisurely, maturing his plans, while he ignited and smoked a fresh cigar.

CHAPTER XXXI.

UNITED AT LAST.

As Fifine had remarked to young Lady Chetwynd, Lady Diana Northwick was in one of her "lonely moods" upon this evening in which her ladyship had yielded to the solicitations of her privileged maid, and consented to see Bernice.

Denying herself to visitors, Lady Diana had shut herself up in her boudoir. She was still in her dinner-dress of pale blue moire, with overskirt of filmy point lace. Amid all the scenes of her social triumphs she had never looked more gloriously fair and beautiful than now, alone in her own room. And yet there was a look of sadness on her face now that even her most intimate friends had never seen there—an expression of wistful yearning that told of secret unrest and vain longings.

Lady Diana was sitting in a low chair before the hearth, with a treasure far more precious to her than all her jewels and luxurious belongings. And yet it was only a baby's half-worn shoe.

It was a tiny pink kid shoe, with an embroidery about the ankle in seed pearls; but the kid was faded, the embroidery was broken in places, the pearls were discolored, and there was a tiny hole at the toe, worn long ago by a restless baby-foot.

"My poor dead baby!" murmured Lady Diana, with a sorrow as fresh and keen as in the day when she had lost her only child. "Ah! if she had lived, I had been a better woman!"

Her tears dropped hot and fast like summer rain, into the little half-worn shoe.

Those who fancied that they knew her best called her ladyship cold as ice and heartless. Could they have seen her now they would have been amazed. Her coldness was but a mask that concealed the warmth of a glowing nature—but the snow that covered the sleeping volcano. Under her cold northern beauty lay hidden a southern nature, full of passion, glow and tender yearning.

"My poor baby!" she sobbed, kissing the little shoe with passionate fervor. "My little, lost child! Shall I find her up there?" and she looked upward toward heaven. "She can never come back to me, but perhaps—perhaps—I shall go to her."

There came a sound of footsteps in the corridor. They halted, and a light knock sounded upon the door of Lady Diana's boudoir.

Her ladyship started, and hurriedly thrust the little shoe into her desk, and locked the latter. Then she wiped her wet eyes, and with a stern effort at self-control, gave the summons to enter.

The door opened, and Fifine came in, followed by the young Marchioness of Chetwynd.

Lady Diana did not perceive at the first glance the slender, black-robed figure in the rear of her maid.

"Is it you, Fifine?" said her ladyship, wearily. "Do you want anything?"

"I have brought the young lady, Miss Gwyn, my lady," said the Frenchwoman. "Her la—Miss Gwyn

is come to see about the post of companion, if you please, my lady."

Fifine stepped aside, and the soft mellow light fell in a tender flood upon the beautiful young marchioness.

Lady Diana instinctively arose and greeted Bernice politely, yet with perceptible surprise. The girl's southern beauty and air of high breeding strangely impressed her. She thought that she had never seen a beauty so refined, so glowing, so tropical and so tender as this that shone in clear olive cheeks, low, broad forehead, floating black hair, and brown eyes, with "looks like birds flying straightway to the light." She saw at once that Bernice was a lady to her heart's core, and she courteously begged her to be seated near the fire.

Fifine went into the dressing-room adjoining, and there busied herself, leaving her former mistress and present mistress to their negotiations.

Those negotiations were brief. Lady Diana felt drawn to Bernice strangely at the outset. She questioned Lady Chetwynd concerning her antecedents, but Bernice was reticent. She said simply that she was an orphan, in reduced circumstances, and compelled to earn her own support. She had no references to give, no credentials whatever, unless Fifine's testimony in her favor would be considered of value.

There was no servility in Bernice's manner. She spoke as one lady speaks to another, as equal addresses equal, yet with a deference and respect and courtesy that were infinitely charming.

"Will you play for me, Miss Gwyn?" asked Diana.

Bernice went to the grand piano, and played a brilliant operatic air with the touch and exquisite expression of a true musician. Then, trailing her fingers slowly over the keys, she began to play a Scottish ballad, accompanying the piano in a voice so clear, so

sweet, so pure, so high in its bird-like range, that Lady Diana held her breath to listen. After the ballad came a difficult Italian operatic song, exquisitely rendered.

"You are a genius, Miss Gwyn," said Lady Diana, charmed and enraptured, "and your genius finds expression in music. Your voice would make your fortune!"

Bernice smiled sorrowfully, as she said:

"I shall never sing in public. I do not care for fortune or fame. I only want a safe shelter. Oh, Lady Diana, I have known the bitterness of utter poverty, of homelessness, of hunger even, and of cold, and I shall be content with a safe home."

Lady Diana was touched at the sadness of the sweet, young voice of the marchioness, and she was quite resolved to engage her as her companion.

"Do you read French, Miss Gwyn?" she asked.

Bernice took up a French book from the table and read aloud a few passages with a clear, sweet intonation, a low, musical voice, and the accent of a Parisian.

Lady Diana expressed her delight.

"Your reading gives me a rare pleasure, Miss Gwyn. I will engage you as my companion. Your duties will consist in reading to me, singing to me, and bearing me company whenever I desire it. Your salary will be a hundred pounds a year, and Fifine may assist you at your toilets. Is this satisfactory?"

"Oh, madame!—oh, Lady Diana!" breathed Bernice, all aglow with delight. "Then I am to stay with you? May I stay to-night?"

She raised her big brown eyes in wistful appeal. Something in that look, or in the eyes themselves, went straight to Lady Diana's heart. With a singular and

unwonted impulsiveness the lady drew Bernice to her breast, and kissed her, murmuring :

“My dear child, you shall have a home henceforth with me. Your sorrows are all over. Your eyes are like sweet eyes that I have loved, and because of the strange resemblance I shall love you—even if for no other reason. You must feel that I am your friend.”

Bernice experienced a strange and sweet content. She loved Lady Diana already with all the impulsiveness of a long starved young tenderness, and Lady Diana's tears dropped upon her lovely face.

“A strange meeting,” said Lady Diana, trying to smile. “I am not myself to-night. Something about you, Miss Gwyn, agitates me strangely. You are excited too, I see. Fifine tells me that you have been ill, and this excitement is not good for you. Fifine shall show you to your room.”

She touched a little silver call-bell on the table. Fifine came in from the dressing-room.

“Fifine,” said Lady Diana, “Miss Gwyn will remain as my companion. You can show her to her room—the rose room, opposite my dressing-room.”

Bernice said good-night gracefully, and retired with Fifine.

“What a singular impression this girl makes upon me,” said Lady Diana, pacing her floor. “Who is she? with the beauty of an angel, and the exquisite manners of a French marquise. How lovely she is, and yet how pure, with something nun-like about her. And her innocent eyes, so like my baby's eyes. Ah! if my baby had lived, and had grown to be like this girl, I should be the happiest woman in all the world to-night!”

During the next day Lady Diana kept Bernice with her almost constantly, finding a keen and new delight in the girl's companionship.

At four o'clock Lady Diana went to drive in the park. At six o'clock she returned, and retired to her dressing-room to dress for dinner. And at eight o'clock Lady Diana dined in state in her magnificent dining-saloon, attended by her pompous butler and three footmen in powder and livery. An elderly lady friend and young Lady Chetwynd dined with their patroness. After dinner Lady Diana proceeded alone to the drawing-room, and her two companions retired to their separate rooms.

Lady Diana had scarcely ensconced herself in an easy chair with the last new book from Mudie's, when a visitor was announced—Mr. Tempest.

Lady Diana received him with *empressement*. The great explorer was looking unusually grave and preoccupied this evening, but also unusually grand and distinguished in appearance. He bowed his stately head low as he returned Lady Diana's greetings, and took possession of a seat which her ladyship indicated to him.

"Are you going to Lady Graham's ball this evening, Lady Diana?" asked Mr. Tempest. "I understand that it is to be the largest crush of the season."

Lady Diana shrugged her white shoulders.

"I prefer to spend the evening at home. Are you going?"

"Not to the ball, Lady Diana," said Tempest, gravely. "I think I shall go to no more balls or parties. I have had my brief career in London; have flashed up like a meteor; been fêted, dined and honored far beyond my deserts; and now I believe I will give place to a new sensation. In fact I am thinking of going back to Tartary."

His keen black eyes searched her face. He saw that she was suddenly pale.

"Is not this a sudden resolution, Mr. Tempest?" asked her ladyship.

"Oh, no, madam. I did not intend to remain nearly so long in England as I have already done. My business in England is concluded. I shall probably leave London this week, and never return to it. I have no ties in Britain; I shall devote my life to Tartary as Livingstone devoted his to Africa."

"And do you expect to find happiness in a nomadic life in Tartary?" demanded Lady Diana, bitterly.

"No, madam, not happiness, but occupation," answered Mr. Tempest. "My call upon you this evening is perhaps the last I shall make; I shall ever remember you with kindness, Lady Diana, and I hope that your marriage with Lord Tentamour may be the crowning glory and joy of your life."

Lady Di's snow-white face flushed carmine.

"You are strangely mistaken, Mr. Tempest," she exclaimed. "I do not contemplate a marriage with Lord Tentamour."

"But many have told me that you were engaged to marry Tentamour, Lady Diana."

"As you have lived so long in Tartary, Mr. Tempest, you may be excused for believing popular rumor. I was engaged to marry Tentamour, but I have discovered that we are not suited to each other, and have given back to Tentamour his freedom."

"After accepting the devotion of the best years of his life?" said Tempest, sternly.

"Has Tentamour sent you to intercede for him?" cried Lady Diana, with a flash of defiance. "I have accepted Lord Tentamour's devotion, sir, but it was not because I loved him, but because I was all alone in the world and had none other to care for me. I knew him when I was but a school-girl. I loved him then. But

I married Sir Rupert Northwick at my mother's command, and I strove to forget Tentamour. I did my duty to my husband whom I did not love. I never failed to respect and honor him, thank God. But it was Lord Tentamour who wrecked my life and the life of my husband. Sir Rupert never suspected that my mother was deeply in debt and that she forced me to marry him, and that I was sold to him just as truly as the Circassian girl in the Turkish slave market is sold to the highest bidder. He never—never knew all that—and yet—”

“And yet, Lady Diana?”

“Let all that pass,” said the Lady Diana, with a shudder. “As for Tentamour, I do not love him, and I could not so wrong him as to marry him not loving him. His love for me has a strong element of selfishness in it. If I were poor and obscure, I know that he would not care for me.”

“I think you are right, Lady Diana. At any rate, it is better to wound Tentamour by refusing to marry him than to marry him not loving him. You are free now to marry whom you will. Lady Diana, you have been very gracious to me. Have I been merely the sport of a coquette, or have I deceived myself? The words I am about to speak to you have been told to you by a hundred tongues, but the story is, perhaps, always new. I am a lonely, sorrowful embittered man, but I love you with all my heart and soul. Will you be my wife?”

Lady Diana started. Notwithstanding all her experience with lovers, the declaration took her by surprise. She flushed rosy red, then paled, and her eyes drooped shyly like a girl's, as she whispered :

“Yes, Basil.”

Tempest's face kindled with a light like that of the

sun. He put his arms around her and drew her to him, and said :

“Diana, do you love me?”

“Yes,” she whispered, softly and shyly. “I love you, Basil, better than my life.”

“Better than you loved Tentamour?”

“That was a school-girl’s fancy. I love you, Basil, with all the strength of my woman’s nature, as I never loved before. And you, Basil?”

“You are mine, my life, my soul!” he said, passionately kissing and embracing her. “Are you very sure, Diana, that you love me for myself alone? I am your—”

“Basil, you wound me. Do you deem me mercenary now because I married Sir Rupert for his money? I have enough for us both. I am glad you are poor.”

“Tell me again that you love me.”

“I love you, Basil,” she whispered again, shyly, with a great passionate love for him shining in her blue eyes, on her lovely face. “You are all the world to me—you whom I did not know two months ago.”

“You have made your confession to me,” said Tempest, “now hear mine. There is something similar in our histories. I, too, have been married—”

“You, Basil? Ah, yes, I heard you were a widower.”

“And my wife married me for my money,” said Tempest. “I overheard between her and her lover a conversation which drove me mad. I crept up stairs to my room and scratched a note to her telling her I had heard all. I went to the nursery—I seized my little child—I fled with her—”

“My God!”

“I took the child out of England and placed her in strange hands. Ah, I am sure now, that I was half mad! And I went to Tartary, and have remained

there ever since. I returned this year to seek my daughter but found her dead. I saw you—loved you—and won your love. Diana, my real name is not Basil Tempest,” and he arose and stood before her, grand, noble and kingly: “my name is Sir Ropert Northwick?”

There was a dead and awful silence. Lady Diana cowered before him in an agony. She knew him now, but she had not before suspected his identity. She thought that he had won her love but to mock her, to revenge himself upon her, to throw her aside, and her soul nearly died within her. She looked up, but his face was stern and terrible as the face of an accusing judge.

With a faint shriek, a wail of despair, Lady Diana covered her face with her hands.

“Diana!” he called to her, softly.

She looked up again. The sternness had melted from his face as ice melts in the sunshine. He was looking at her now with a smile of ineffable love and tenderness, with a great yearning in his black eyes, a great emotion on his swarthy features.

“Come to me, Diana,” he said, yet more softly—“come, darling, my precious wife—won at last!—come to your rightful home!”

He opened wide his arms.

With a great cry of joy Lady Diana sprang forward, and was clasped to his heart.

Husband and wife were united at last!

CONCLUSION.

Sir Rupert Northwick and Lady Diana were seated side by side upon a sofa half an hour later, nearly calm, but filled with a joy unspeakable, when another visitor

was announced—Lord Tentamour. His lordship came in with the air of one at home. He had called to obtain a private interview with Lady Diana, but a look of chagrin crossed his face as he beheld the great explorer.

“Introduce me to his lordship, Diana,” said Sir Rupert, quietly.

Tentamour stared.

“Lord Tentamour,” said Lady Diana, with an air of joyful pride, which she could not repress, “allow me to introduce to you in our masquerading explorer, Mr. Basil Tempest, my husband, Sir Rupert Northwick.”

Tentamour recoiled in his amazement.

“By Jove! you know,” he gasped, “it can’t be possible!”

His lordship did not prolong his visit. He went away almost immediately. A few minutes later other guests arrived, and were ushered into the drawing-room. The new-comers were Lord Chetwynd and Bisset, the detective officer.

“This is an unexpected surprise,” cried the baronet, coming forward to meet Chetwynd with a beaming face. “What brings you here so opportunely, my lord? But permit me to present you to my wife, Lady Diana Northwick.”

Lord Chetwynd and Bisset looked their surprise, but the marquis bowed to her ladyship, who blushed like a girl.

“I have been masquerading,” explained the baronet. “My name is not Tempest, my lord. In consequence of reasons that I once explained to your lordship, I changed my name and abandoned my country. But my wife has won me back to my proper place, and you will henceforth know me under my true name of Sir Rupert Northwick.”

“It sounds like a romance,” said Chetwynd. “I con-

gratulate you, Sir Rupert and Lady Diana, upon your happiness."

"Lady Diana Northwick, Mr. Bisset," said Sir Rupert, courteously. "I have a confession, or revelation, rather, to make, and Mr. Bisset may as well hear it. In consequence of a domestic misunderstanding, I abandoned my home some fifteen or sixteen years ago, taking with me my only child. I took her aboard my yacht, and carried her away from England to the remote island of St. Kilda, in the Hebridean group, and I left her there in the care of the good minister and his wife, intending to reclaim the child within five years."

Chetwynd uttered a quick exclamation, but Sir Rupert motioned him to silence, and continued :

"I never went back to St. Kilda. I can hardly account for my criminal negligence of my own child. I was always saying to myself, 'I will go back next year;' but I never went. I thought her safe. I knew the minister and his wife would be good to her. They were gentle people, and had no children of their own. The child thus abandoned by me grew into girlhood. You saw her, my lord; and you loved her, you married her. She was known to you as Bernice Gwellan. Her true name was Diana Northwick."

Lady Diana and Lord Chetwynd were alike speechless.

"I offer no excuses for myself," said Sir Rupert, sorrowfully. "My poor little child! She is dead, Diana. Chetwynd brought her to England as his wife, but she died some two months afterward of a fever contracted in visiting the cottage of a sick tenant on the estate. She never knew a father's or a mother's love but she did know a husband's love, Diana, and her last days were happy."

Lady Diana, sobbing now as no one had ever seen her sob, held out her hand to Chetwynd. He grasped it.

"It is all very strange," said Bisset, philosophically, "but the strangest thing of all, Sir Rupert, is that none of your old friends recognized you on your return as Basil Tempest."

"It is not singular," said the baronet, "I have changed in sixteen years. I went away a slender young fellow; I am come back grizzled, taller, heavier, darker, and with a beard. I never wore a beard in those early days. My own wife had not even the faintest suspicion of my identity, and I took care that she should not have."

A double knock on the house door announced more visitors.

"We are holding a reception to-night, Diana," said Sir Rupert. "Who comes now?"

"Some guests whom I have taken the liberty to invite to this house," said Bisset, calmly. "And here they are."

The door opened and the footman announced Miss Monk and Mr. Monk.

Sylvia Monk came in leaning on her brother's arm. She wore a white opera cloak over a long robe of light silk. She had been to the opera, and had stopped at Lady Diana's with her brother on her way home.

She advanced to Lady Di and held out her hand.

"I received your note, Lady Diana," she said, in her soft, sibilant tones, "asking me to stop in with Gilbert on my way home from the opera. You are not having a party, I think?"

"I have no party, Miss Monk," she said, "but a little reunion I may perhaps call it. Permit me to introduce to you in the gentleman you have known as Mr. Tempest, my own husband, whom I have for many years believed to be dead—Sir Rupert Northwick."

Miss Monk and Gilbert Monk expressed their surprise and tendered their congratulations. They believed that they had been invited to witness the installation of Sir Rupert Northwick, whom they had known as Tempest, in his rightful dignities.

"We have made a singular discovery, Sylvia," said Lord Chetwynd. "Bernice was the daughter of Sir Rupert and Lady Diana Northwick."

Gilbert Monk uttered a low, half-smothered curse, and strode toward the window.

"So they have found out who Bernice is," he thought. "Well, what if they have? All is not lost yet. I shall find the girl—I'm always lucky—and I'll marry her yet."

Miss Monk appeared to sympathize with the parents in this latest disclosure.

"Poor Bernice!" she sighed. "If she could but have known this her life might have been happier. It caused her a great many sorrowful hours that she did not know her parentage. The mystery darkened her life—poor girl!"

"Our conversation seems taking a gloomy turn," said Mr. Bisset. "This occasion is pre-eminently a joyful one, and although I am only a self-invited guest, I venture to suggest that we have a little inspiring music before we separate. Lady Diana, will you not order your companion—I suppose you have a companion—in to play for us?"

Lady Diana bowed assent somewhat coldly, and requested Mr. Bisset to ring the bell. The detective officer skipped lightly to the bell-rope and pulled it. Then as lightly he skipped to the door and gave the necessary order to the tall, beplushed and becalved footman, in a whisper.

He waited at the door until he heard the rustling of silken garments on the stairs.

Then he opened the door. Young Lady Chetwynd was in the hall approaching the door of the drawing-room. Dropping his little affectations, Bisset gravely offered the young lady his arm, saying that Lady Diana desired him to conduct her companion into her presence.

Bernice laid her hand lightly on his arm, and he conducted her into the drawing-room and under the full blaze of the chandelier.

Then he stepped back, leaving her alone, and cried out, in a ringing voice :

"Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to present to you Lady Chetwynd's Spectre."

For an instant all was still as death.

Bernice's brain reeled. She seemed blind. An awful horror seized upon her. She believed that she had been betrayed to some terrible fate or punishment. Her great brown eyes looked in wild appeal from one white scared face to another, and then settled in an agony of beseeching upon that of Lord Chetwynd.

She knew him. She felt only in that moment how she loved him. She threw up her arms, crying out :

"Oh, Roy ! Roy ! save me !"

Chetwynd stood as if turned to stone, staring at her wildly.

"My lord," said Bisset, calmly. "I have done the work you set me to do. I have discovered the mystery of Lady Chetwynd's spectre. You have been the victim of a diabolical conspiracy between those Monks and the Hindoo woman Ragee. Lady Chetwynd did not die, but was buried in a trance brought on by a devilish Indian drug administered to her by Sylvia Monk, I presume. Gilbert Monk rescued Lady Chetwynd, and meant to marry her. She has escaped all her perils—she lives—she stands before you, the living

wife you loved, the wife you have so bitterly mourned."

Again Bernice looked to Chetwynd in wild appeal. And now, as if galvanized, he started from his frozen stupor, bounded forward, and took her in his arms, straining her to his breast. She had come back to him from the grave! They were reunited on earth, and earth was become to them both a heaven!

Gilbert and Sylvia Monk slunk in silence from the house, and Bisset tranquilly followed them. Bernice told her marvellous story again and again; Lord Chetwynd told how he had mourned for her, and how she had brought back the light and glow and warmth to his life; and Lady Diana and Sir Rupert told their story and claimed their daughter, and the night was brimful of such joy as is seldom known to humanity.

We need not linger upon the events that followed. Lady Chetwynd returned to Chetwynd Park in a joyous triumph, and her faithful Fifine accompanied her as confidential attendant at a quadrupled salary. Monsieur and Madame Bongateau found their business flourish so rapidly under the extensive patronage and recommendations of Lady Chetwynd and Lady Diana Northwick that they were obliged to remove to Regent Street, where they enjoy a lucrative patronage and deserved renown.

The Monks transferred themselves with old Ragee to the Continent, and some three months later Sylvia perished miserably. She had recourse to a soothing draught in a fit of physical weakness produced by passion, and by some strange mistake took a powerful corrosive poison. She died in a horrible agony, the fate being meted out to her which she would have measured to Bernice.

Ragee returned to India, broken-hearted at the death

of her nursling and mistress. Gilbert Monk still lives, a wanderer on the face of the earth, getting his living by that most precarious of supports—"his wits."

Bisset received a princely reward for his services, and is fond of talking to his first intimates of the mystery of Lady Chetwynd's spectre. He is a welcome guest at Chetwynd Park or Northwick Place in Surrey, and two happier homes than these two cannot be found upon this earth.

After the storm has come the glorious sunshine that will last while life endures.

THE END.

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